PERCEPTIONS OF PARTNER VIOLENCE AMONG A SAMPLE OF SELF-IDENTIFIED PUERTO RICAN AND NON-HISPANIC WHITE MEN AND WOMEN IN CUYAHOGA COUNTY, OHIO

by

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>List of Tables</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 1. Partner Violence in the United States</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The United States: A Culture of Violence?</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An Historical Perspective of Partner Violence in the United States</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 2. Patterns of Partner Violence: Findings in the U.S.</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men and Violence</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men Assaulting Women</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men Assaulting Men</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women and Violence</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women Assaulting Men</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women Assaulting Women</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patterns and Perceptions of Partner Violence among U.S. Subgroups</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consequences of Intimate Partner Violence</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 3. Patterns of Partner Violence: Findings from Outside of the</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incidence and Prevalence</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceptions of Partner Violence</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Causes of Partner Violence 39
   Economic Factors 39
   Alcohol 42
   Domination 43
   Other Factors 44
   Protective Factors 44

Summary 45

Chapter 4. The Causes of Partner Violence: Theory 46
   Cultural Themes 47
   Psychosocial Themes 51
   Biological Themes 55
   Multifactoral Themes 58

Summary 60

Chapter 5. The Status of Men and Women in U.S. Society 62
   Constructing Gender 62
   Defining Men and Masculinity in the U.S. 64
   Women in U.S. Society 68
      Defining Femininity 68
      The Objectification of Women 72
      The Devaluation of Women 76
   Not-Men, Not-Women: The Status of Alternative Sexualities 78

Summary 82

Chapter 6. Men and Women in Puerto Rican Culture 86

v

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Defining Ethnicity</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Historical Context</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Spanish Conquest</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The U.S. Invasion and Occupation</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Migration to the U.S. Mainland</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Puerto Ricans: On the Island and the Mainland</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment, Income, and Health</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Puerto Rican Family Life</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture, Gender Role, and Partner Violence</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender Roles and Relations</td>
<td>116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ascribed Cultural Values</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic Strain, Role Transformation, and Violence</td>
<td>132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Legal Infrastructure of Puerto Rico</td>
<td>135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>141</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 7. Responses to Partner Violence</td>
<td>145</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Systemic/Cultural Responses</td>
<td>145</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overview</td>
<td>145</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Societal-Level Responses in the U.S.</td>
<td>147</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychosocial/Individual Responses</td>
<td>151</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Assaultive Partner</td>
<td>151</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Assaulted Partner</td>
<td>160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>177</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 8. Methods</td>
<td>180</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 9. Discovering Themes

General Approach

Uncovering the Cause of Partner Violence

Sex- and Gender-Associated Behaviors

Environmental and Situational Factors

Substance Use and Mental Illness

Individual Characteristics

Other Themes

Deciding What to Do

Leaving the Relationship

Calling the Police

Seeking Counseling

Other Options

Summary
Chapter 10. Results: The Puerto Rican Sample 208

Identifying the Cause of Partner Violence 208

Sex- and Gender-Associated Behaviors 208

Environmental and Situational Factors 217

Substance Use and Mental Illness 222

Individual Characteristics 225

Other Themes 229

Deciding What to Do 231

Leaving the Relationship 232

Calling the Police 233

Counseling 235

Other Strategies 237

Summary 241

Chapter 11. Results: The Non-Hispanic White Sample 244

Identifying the Cause of Partner Violence 244

Sex- and Gender-Associated Behaviors 244

Environmental and Situational Factors 250

Substance Use and Mental Illness 254

Individual Characteristics 258

Deciding What to Do 263

Leaving the Relationship 263

Calling the Police 264

Counseling 265

viii

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
Other Strategies 267

Summary 270

Chapter 12. Discussion 273

Appendix 281

Bibliography 287
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Selected Studies Outside the U.S. on the Incidence and Prevalence of Partner Violence</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Causal Theories of Partner Violence and Abuse</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Number of Responses to Vignette Series by Gender and Ethnicity</td>
<td>184</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Recruitment of Participants by Type of Source</td>
<td>186</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Demographic Characteristics by Ethnicity</td>
<td>191</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Frequency of Themes among Puerto Rican Respondents</td>
<td>208</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Frequency of Themes among Non-Hispanic White Respondents</td>
<td>244</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Frequency of Themes by Ethnicity and Sex</td>
<td>274</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Perceptions of Partner Violence among a Sample of Self-Identified Puerto Rican and Non-Hispanic White Men and Women in Cuyahoga County, Ohio

Abstract

by

SANA LOUE

This dissertation examines two research questions: (1) what factor or factors do self-identified Puerto Rican respondents and self-identified non-Hispanic white respondents identify as the cause or causes of intimate partner violence and (2) what solution or solutions do self-identified Puerto Rican and non-Hispanic white respondents suggest in situations involving varying levels of partner violence?

Interviews using constructed scenarios as prompts were conducted with 16 Puerto Rican women, 10 Puerto Rican men, 10 non-Hispanic white women, and 9 non-Hispanic white men recruited from various clinics, counseling services, churches, and vocational programs in Cuyahoga County. Interviews were conducted by the interviewer and two trained interviewers in English or in Spanish, based on the participant’s preference. Transcripts were examined for patterns and themes that emerged from the data. Data were also examined for concepts brought to the study from a theoretical perspective (“sensitizing concepts”), such as patriarchy, evolution, etc. In examining the data for themes, each participant was considered as a “case study.” The distribution of various demographic characteristics was examined.
The three most frequently offered reasons for partner violence that were given by Puerto Rican participants were substance use, violations of behavior roles traditionally associated with a particular gender, and infidelity. Non-Hispanic white participants offered most frequently as explanations for the violence substance use, infidelity, and individual characteristics of the assaultive partner. The solutions to the violence most frequently suggested in response to the violence depicted in the vignettes included leaving the relationship, calling the police, and seeking counseling as potential solutions to the violence.
INTRODUCTION

Well, it was my father. He was drunk. My father was an alcoholic and he was drunk and he was beating up on my mother. It was an almost every day thing. One time he chased her down the street, she didn’t have no clothes on and he was beating her and then he somehow took up a tool and he almost fell on it. At the time I wished he would have died, but not really, I think that was the worst time in my life. But it was every day she was getting hit.

So I went with this guy, he was a Puerto Rican guy. We were doing good until one time he sucker punched me and I almost lost my eye so I said bye and my mother told me, she always tells me, once you let a man hit you, it’s continuously.

Well, me and my mother, we talked not too long ago and I asked her about my father and I asked her, how could you always take those beatings, I said did you love him? She never loved him. She was 13 when she met my father and he abused her from the age of 13 until I was 15 years old. Her mother would always take her back from my father but he would always con her mother, oh I’m doing good, I’m not drinking, somehow, you know my mother would always go back because of being scared. You know a lot of it was he had her scared to death, she wouldn’t budge without asking, she didn’t take a piss without his permission, you know it was sickening and she always told me you let a man hit you once they do it for the rest of your life. And seeing what she went through I believed it so this guy hit me, I lost my hearing. I was about 15 and I went to the hospital and the guy told me I had no hearing at all. So I let him go.

The culture. I don’t know. Very hard headed and very tempered. And when they get alcohol in them, they’re very violent. Huge problem, but there’s something, I don’t know. They get very abusive. And sometimes Latino, like my dad, he’s had blackouts, he never used to remember shit, I mean, never actually remembered stuff.

I go to church every Sunday in [city] and like the priest has a saying, “Fill out the paper, rip it up.” For this and for that and on one side they have, I don’t know if it was in the church where we were, they have a little thing for the crisis center and stuff. They should advertise it in the church papers because a lot of people keep them but I know a lot of people that are into the church and nowadays even though a lot of teenage violence has come out, you still get middle age, the people that have been married for years and is keeping everything under the table, that are afraid
to make that, you know, and the majority of them go to church and nobody knows about it and go to make-up places to hide all the bruises.

The experiences of Alma and her parents raise numerous questions. Was this partner violence? Would it be universally considered to be partner violence? If it is violence, why might it have occurred? Is Alma’s family’s identity as Puerto Ricans relevant in any way to this occurrence? Is the fact of her parents’ birth in Puerto Rico and her own birth in the United States relevant to the occurrence or perceptions of the occurrence? What impact does the fact of Alma’s father’s drinking have on perceptions of the incident and various individuals’ responsibility for the incident’s occurrence? What options are available to each individual if this is, indeed, violence?

Whether the scenes that Alma (fictitious name) witnessed and then experienced herself would fall within the rubric of partner violence is highly dependent upon the definition of partner violence that is utilized. It has been said that the power of naming is at least two-fold, naming defines the quality and value of that which is named—and it also denies reality and value to that which is never named, never uttered. That which has no name, that for which we have no words or concepts, is rendered mute and invisible; powerless to inform or transform our consciousness of our experience, our understanding, our vision, powerless to claim its own existence (Du Bois, 1983: 108).

And yet, in order to live in the world, we must name it. Names are essential for the construction of reality, for without a name it is difficult to accept the existence of an object, an event, a feeling (Spender, 1980: 163).

Many of the definitions that have been formulated include intentionality as a critical element. For instance, Reiss and Roth (1993) define violence as “behavior by persons against persons that intentionally threatens, attempts, or actually inflicts physical...
harm.” Similarly, Brown (1992:1) defines “wife beating” as the intentional infliction of pain by man on a woman, “within a non-transient, male-female relationship, whether or not the partners are officially married.” Wife-beating, Brown asserts, is often culturally expected, tolerated by the recipient female partners, and not at all seen as deviant. Wife battering, in contrast, refers to extraordinary behavior that is neither usual nor acceptable within the referent society and may result in serious injury, disability, and even death.

In contrast, Komblit (1994: 1181) distinguishes between abuse and violence:

The former refers to actions which are harmful for the victim, both physically as well as mentally, committed or resulting from omission, carried out intentionally or not. Violence in a limited sense is used to refer to physical aggression. Maltreatment includes abuse (physical, sexual, and/or emotional) and neglect (physical, educational, and/or affective).

Yet another definition is offered by Loseke (1992), who limits the term “wife abuse” to encompass only women, regardless of marital status, who can be perceived as “pure victims” of their male offenders. According to Loseke’s perceptions of how wife abuse is constructed in the U.S., the term encompasses not single incidents, but only situations in which there exists a pattern of terrifying physical violence or a continuing series of terrifying abusive and degrading acts that are characterized by increasing severity and frequency and necessarily result in physical injury.

Using the Reiss and Roth definition of violence, it is not clear whether Alma’s father’s behavior would be characterized as violence because of his drunkenness; could he have formed a specific intent to injure if he were that drunk, or does his drunkenness serve as an excuse for his behavior? If it is the latter, his behavior might be relegated to the category of “abuse.” Komblit, however, would characterize Alma’s father’s behavior as violence regardless of the intent. Brown might assert that such “wife-
beating" was culturally expected and certainly seems to be tolerated on at least some level. After all, Alma’s mother consistently returned to her husband, and Alma’s grandmother consistently forgave him for the suffering he brought to her daughter. And, if we were to rely on Loseke’s definition, we might consider this incident to be abuse because it appears to be part of a continuing pattern.

But how does “Everyperson” view partner violence? Kelly (1990) found from her interviews with 60 women that 60% did not initially identify their own experiences as a form of violence, but 70% did so as the violence became more frequent and as their understandings of what had happened to them changed over time. Ultimately, the characterization of each individual’s experience in the scenario presented at the beginning of this introduction and what he or she might do in response to the situation may depend upon beliefs about the nature of the incident and the underlying reasons for such experiences.

This dissertation examines two of these issues within a sample of self-identified individuals of Puerto Rican ethnicity and self-identified whites residing in Cuyahoga County, Ohio. First, what factor or factors do self-identified Puerto Rican respondents and self-identified non-Hispanic white respondents identify as the cause or causes of intimate partner violence? Second, what solution or solutions do self-identified Puerto Rican respondents and self-identified non-Hispanic white respondents suggest in situations involving varying levels of partner violence?
CHAPTER ONE

PARTNER VIOLENCE IN THE UNITED STATES

THE UNITED STATES: A CULTURE OF VIOLENCE?

By all accounts, the United States can be characterized as an extremely violent society and one of the most violent in the world. Women in the United States are at higher risk of homicide victimization than are women in any other high-income society (Hemenway, Shinoda-Tagawa, and Miller, 2002). In 1998, the deaths of almost three-quarters of all women murdered were attributable to their intimate partners (Rennison and Welchans, 2002). For the period 1993 through 1999, intimates killed 32% of all female murder victims ages 20 to 24 (Rennison, 2001). Additionally, homicide is a major contributor to deaths occurring during pregnancy (Dannenberg, Carter, Lawson, et al., 1995).

It has been estimated that in the United States alone, each year approximately 1.8 million women to 4 million women are physically assaulted by their intimate partners (Sorenson et al., 1996). One or both partners in approximately 500,000 couples sustain injuries from violence each year (Sorenson et al., 1996).

In addition, the United States has the highest rate of childhood homicide of any industrialized nation in the world (Division of Violence Prevention, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 1997). In fact, homicide represents the leading cause of infant deaths due to injury in the U.S. (Overpeck, Brenner, Trumble, et al., 1998). An estimated 37,000 children were killed in the United States between 1976 and 1994; one-fifth of these murders were committed by
a family member (Greenfield, 1996). Children under the age of 18 accounted for nearly 11% of all murder victims in the United States in 1994. Nearly half of these children were between the ages of 15 and 17; among those killed in this age group, nearly 70% were killed with a handgun. Almost 20% of the victims were killed by another child. (United States Department of Justice, 2002).

Firearm use now accounts for approximately 70% of all murders (Rennison, June 2001). The United States held the record during the 1990s for more people being killed with guns in a typical week than Western Europeans experienced in an entire year (DeConde, 2001). From 1973 to 1999, more than 80% of all workplace homicides were committed with a firearm (Duhart, 2001). Homicide rates due to the use of firearms are particularly high among the southern states, reflecting a continuing historical trend (United States Department of Justice, 2002). This regional variation in rate has been attributed to both sociocultural factors and to ease of access to firearms (Paulozzi, Saltzman, Thomson, et al., 2001; O’Connor and Lizotte, 1979).

Despite the increase in gun-related homicides, numerous state legislatures during the last 15 years have eased restrictions on the availability and use of firearms. For instance, some states now allow citizens to carry concealed weapons even into churches and some government buildings. Some states, such as Louisiana, allow individuals to use deadly force to kill an intruder in their homes. Still other provisions empower motorists to shoot to kill carjackers (DeConde, 2001).
AN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE OF PARTNER VIOLENCE IN THE UNITED STATES

Some might argue that the apparently high level of partner violence in the United States is but one reflection of the violent nature of U.S. society as a whole and that current levels of partner violence in the United States are more than a temporal anomaly. During colonial times, Anglo-American common law permitted a husband to use corporal punishment or “chastisement” on his wife, as long as he did not injure her permanently. The Puritans, however, did not condone violence against wives because it was perceived as a threat to stability and order. The Massachusetts Bay and Plymouth Bay colonies, in fact, adopted laws prohibiting wife abuse, but the laws were not strictly enforced. Colonial courts emphasized reconciliation and often ordered that wives who had left their homes be returned to their husbands, even in cases involving abuse.

Later, courts of the various states mirrored English law and refused to intrude into the sanctity of the marital relationship except in those cases in which the husband was deemed to have exceeded the bounds of moderate chastisement. For instance, in 1836, a New Hampshire court denied a woman a divorce because she refused to submit to the legitimate authority of her husband and had acted in an unbecoming manner. The court went on to state that “a woman who provoked her husband’s anger, and who refused to remain silent even in the face of his temper, deserved any abuse inflicted upon her as a result of her disobedience and had no cause for complaint.” The court concluded by stating that “although society condemned the husband’s unmanly conduct in beating his wife, it abhorred even more the wife’s unseemly rebellion against the proper exercise of his authority” (Poor v. Poor, 1836: 310-313).
It was not until the nineteenth century that United States and British law prohibited chastisement. Reform was due, in part, to the efforts of activists in both the temperance and the feminist movements. Temperance supporters viewed spousal violence as the result of alcohol use and sought its prohibition as a means of protecting women from the resulting abuse. Feminists decried the ability of husbands to control their wives as if they were possessions and attacked the practice of chastisement as the symbolic embodiment of the husband’s authority over his wife. Nevertheless, wife abuse was seen as an aberration, attributed to men who were in some way depraved (Gordon, 1988).

By the late 1800s, most states refused to recognize any longer the right of a husband to chastise his wife. However, although the states no longer actively supported spousal violence, they failed to adopt laws or policies that would provide support to those who were beaten. Instead, they portrayed marriage as a companionate relationship that was unsuited to legal regulation. Courts sought to preserve families at all costs, even to the point of coercing battered victims to withdraw their complaints by refusing to award financial assistance from the husband and/or refusing to grant protection orders against further violence. By 1910, only 35 states had passed legislation that classified wife-beating as an assault (Dowd, 1992).

In arenas outside of law enforcement, as well, United States society appeared to be tolerant, if not even accepting, of male violence toward their wives. Wifebeating was euphemistically known as “family maladjustment” within counseling professions. Psychiatry depicted the battered woman as a masochist who deliberately provoked her husband into beating her (Pleck, 1987).
As recently as 36 years ago, it was suggested that arrest is an inappropriate response to partner violence (Parmas, 1993). Thirty years later, the same commentator suggested that the tripartite approach of arrest, prosecution, and sanction be utilized to display to the batterer public disapprobation and protection of the injured (Parmas, 1993).

This metamorphosis has been attributed to the occurrence of three successive events. First, a Connecticut court held that a municipality could be held financially liable for its failure to provide to battered women the same level of protection as was provided to individuals assaulted by strangers (Thurman v. City of Torrington, 1984). Second, the results of the Minneapolis Experiment were released. Study findings demonstrated that among three intervention options designed to reduce or prevent misdemeanor spouse abuse—arrest, separation, or mediation—arrest was associated with the lowest rate of recidivism among batterers (Sherman and Berk, 1984). Third, the United States Attorney’s Task Force on Family Violence issued its final report, which included among its recommendations a call for the processing of all complaints of family violence, the adoption of arrest as the preferred response, and prompt response to all violations of restraining orders (Attorney General’s Task Force on Family Violence, 1984).

Additional systemic changes occurred following these events. The traditional response of prosecutors had been no response; partner violence was seen as a family matter that did not belong in the courts, resulting in low rates of prosecution (Welch, 1994). More recently, a number of jurisdictions have adopted either mandatory arrest policies, requiring the arrest of the assailant, and/or mandatory prosecution policies, requiring that prosecutors pursue a conviction. In such jurisdictions, neither the acquiescence nor the cooperation of the injured party is a prerequisite to the mandated
action. In addition, an increasing number of jurisdictions now require that health care providers report violent injury to law enforcement authorities, regardless of the wishes of the injured party (Lund, 1999).

Change in the societal-level response to partner violence is also evident in the courts. In general, a successful claim of self-defense, such as when a woman kills a man claiming self-defense, required a reasonable belief on the part of the apparently assaultive individual that he or she was in imminent danger of great bodily harm or death at the time the defensive act was committed, and that the only means of escape was through the use of deadly force. A minority of courts have permitted the admission of evidence of the battered woman syndrome, which explains the cyclical pattern of abuse and remorse within the relationship and why an injured party might remain, in trials of women for the murder of their assaultive partners. Critics, however, have argued that the battered woman syndrome serves as both an excuse for the woman’s behavior by perpetuating the stereotype of women as powerless and lacking capacity, and as a justification of particular behavior under difficult circumstances.

These systemic changes, however, have clearly been inadequate in view of the continuing high rates of partner violence in the United States. In fact, despite such changes, the New Jersey legislature found that battered adults continue to have substantial difficulty gaining access to the judicial system and the judicial and law enforcement systems remain unable to generate a prompt response in an emergency (Lengyel, 1990). One must question why, if there has been extensive systemic change, there appears to be so little change reflected in rates of partner violence and particularly partner homicide.
First, it is possible that these responses actually failed to address the underlying reasons for the partner violence. Chapters 2 through 4 focus on possible explanations for why partner violence occurs, examining both theory and empirical research findings, both inside and outside of the United States.

A second explanation could be that, despite apparently broad systemic changes, underlying cultural attitudes towards the value and role of men and women have changed little. This approach is reminiscent of the proverbial chicken and egg dilemma: does cultural change result from systemic modifications that seek to create change or do systemic modifications reflect changes in the underlying culture that have already occurred sufficiently to produce and support the systemic changes? This possible explanation demands a further examination of the status of both men and women in “mainstream” U.S. society; this provides the focus for chapter 5. Because this research involves an examination of perceptions of partner violence by both self-identified Puerto Rican and non-Hispanic white participants, issues relating to the status of men and women by virtue of their gender in the context of Puerto Rican culture are explored in chapter 6.

Third, it is possible that the rate of reported partner violence continues to appear high due to artifacts of reporting. For instance, as it becomes easier to report partner violence due to increased social supports, decreased social stigmatization of the beating victim, and increased societal emphasis on arrest and prosecution of the assailant, battered victims may be more willing and more able to report these incidents. However, it is clear that this is an inadequate explanation for the high rate of violent incidents between partners that culminate in homicide because homicide is the least underreported
of any serious crime in the United States. This possible explanation, then, requires an examination of responses to partner violence, which is considered in chapter 7.

Chapters 8 and 9 set forth in greater detail the basis for the development of the research questions that formed the basis for this study and describes the methodology used. Chapters 10 and 11 present the findings from the interviews with the samples of self-identified Puerto Rican and non-Hispanic white participants. These chapters present the participants' explanations of the causes of partner violence and their suggested resolution of these occurrences. Chapter 12 discusses the implications of these findings, the strengths and weaknesses of the current study, and suggests directions for future research.

SUMMARY

United States culture has been portrayed as one of violence. Statistical data lend support to this assertion. Partner violence constitutes one element within this violent framework. Its occurrence has been not only tolerated, but accepted and legally permitted since the earliest days of U.S. history, despite the serious consequences that may result. This acceptance was premised on the idea that wives had a duty to obey their husbands and husbands had a right to chastise their wives including, the right to physically discipline them if they deemed it necessary. Attempts to eliminate and control partner violence within the legal context, such as mandatory arrest or prosecution of the batterer and the acceptance of self-defense claims by battered women who have injured their assaultive partners, have been relatively recent and their effectiveness has been variable. The question then arises as to why partner violence continues to occur despite
these efforts. Chapter 2 explores patterns that have been noted in the occurrence of partner violence in the United States. It is critical to note, however, that these patterns do not equate with explanations. The detection of patterns may permit us to know who is involved in partner violence as the assailant and/or the victim; how, when, and where the violence occurs; and the consequences of the violence. An examination of patterns does not necessarily provide sufficient detail to allow us to understand why the violence occurs.
CHAPTER TWO
PATTERNS OF PARTNER VIOLENCE: FINDINGS IN THE U.S.

MEN AND VIOLENCE

Men Assaulting Women

Who Are the Women?

Researchers have identified a number of factors associated with an increased risk of assault by intimate partners. These factors are not, however, necessarily causal. Women who appear to be at highest risk of assault by intimate partners are younger, urban dwellers, African Americans, and those with lesser education and lower incomes (Sorenson, Upchurch, and Shen, 1996). Women under the age of 20 are more likely to know their assailant as an acquaintance than are older women (Peipert and Domagalstei, 1994). Women who receive what had been known as Aid to Families with Dependent Children ("welfare") were found to be three times as likely to have experienced partner aggression during the previous year than were non-recipient women (Corlett, 1999).

Partner violence often begins or escalates during pregnancy (Gillespie, 1988). Pregnant women especially at risk for violence during their pregnancies are those who have been battered prior to pregnancy (McFarlane, Parker, Soeken, and Bullock, 1992). A study of AFDC women in Massachusetts suggested an increased risk of abuse directed towards women who bore and cared for a disabled child (Corlett, 1999). The physical abuse of pregnant Hispanic women has been associated with symbolic violence and threats of violence by the male partner (McFarlane, Wiist, and Watson, 1998).
Studies that have focused specifically on premarital violence between intimates have identified similar risk factors. Female victims tend to be younger than those who are married or divorced, and are more often African-American (Erez, 1986). As with violence directed against wives and divorced partners, violence is more likely to occur on the weekend (Erez, 1986). Although women who report having more liberal attitudes are more likely to report violence during dating (McKinney, 1986), it is not clear that liberal women are more likely to experience dating violence. One research group has theorized that dating violence is more likely to occur if the dating individuals’ attitudes towards sex roles are highly divergent (Sigelman et al., 1984). And, although the research has yielded inconsistent findings, there are some data that lend support to the hypothesis that dating violence is more likely to occur in the context of a serious or steady dating relationship, as compared with a more infrequent or casual relationship (Billingham, 1987; Deal and Wampler, 1986; Laner, 1989; Roscoe and Kelsey, 1986; Sigelman, Berry, and Wiles, 1984).

Female victims of intimate partner violence have been found more likely to use multiple substances (cigarettes, alcohol, and illegal drugs) than are nonvictims (Martin et al., 1996). This association has been found in the context of dating violence (Makepeace, 1981). Homicide has been found more likely to occur among couples of lower socioeconomic status (Chimbos, 1998) and those in which the wife is substantially younger than the husband (Chimbos, 1998; Cohen, Llorente, and Eisdorfer, 1998). One writer, herself a battered woman, has enumerated based on her own experience “warning characteristics” of women who may be particularly susceptible to abuse: the need to
rescue the male, self-hatred, an acceptance of abuse, the ability to lie to oneself, a family history of dysfunctionality, and a fear of being alone (Schwartz, 2000).

**Who Are the Men?**

Stereotypes of abusive men depict such individuals as crude, uneducated, neurotic, macho misogynists—in short, “pigs” (Dutton and Golant, 1995). However, research reveals a surprisingly different portrait.

Men who batter have reported instances of parental rejecting or shaming behavior, instances of physical assaults against them or their mothers, intense fear of abandonment, frequent anger, trauma symptoms such as sleep disturbances and memory loss for specific events, reliance on alcohol or drugs to ward off pain, a tendency to blame others, and cyclical mood swings (Dutton and Galant, 1995).

In fact, it appears that battering behavior among men arises not from dominance, but from tremendous insecurity. Men who batter have been found to have low self-esteem and an excessive need for control (Wodarski, 1987). For instance, men who batter have been described in clinical reports as exhibiting extreme dependence on their wives or girlfriends; they may use threats and abuse to forestall their partner’s separation from the relationship (Vaselle-Augenstein and Ehrlich, 1992). They may be fearful of intimate relationships and have been found to be highly jealous and possessive (Dutton and Golant, 1995; Wodarski, 1987). The extreme jealousy has been referred to as “conjugal paranoia” or “morbid jealousy” (Dutton and Golant, 1995). Jealousy has also been identified as one of the primary factors in the occurrence of dating violence (Makepeace, 1981; Matthews, 1984; Roscoe and Kelsey, 1986).
The male batterer’s insecurity and low self-esteem often surface first during adolescence. During this time, the fear of abandonment is transformed to incorporate sexual content and is expressed as sexual jealousy. Feelings of anxiety, dependence, and fear are, however, unacceptable and must be negated (Dutton and Golant, 1995).

Men who batter often function well in superficial relationships, in contrast to their abusiveness in more intimate relations (Vaselle-Augenstein and Ehrlich, 1992). Consequently, clinicians have characterized batterers as having a “Jekyll and Hyde” personality. Researchers have, as a result, hypothesized that such men may have borderline personality traits and act out their hostility (Dutton and Golant, 1995; Else, Wonderlich, Beatty, Christie, and Staton, 1993). In fact, men who batter their partners have been found to be more likely to abuse their children (Straus, 1983) and to have battered women in previous relationships (Vaselle-Augenstein and Ehrlich, 1992).

Men who express attitudes indicating dominance over women with respect to such things as money, sex, and social interactions have been found to be more likely to engage in partner violence (Smith, 1990). The use of alcohol has also been found to be associated with husband-wife violence (Gondolf, 1988; Fagan, Stewart, and Hansen, 1983; Kaufman, Kantor, and Straus, 1987), although it is unclear whether the association between alcohol and assaults is a function of the interaction of personality characteristics with the alcohol (see Hamberger and Hastings, 1988), the batterer’s expectations associated with alcohol use (Fagan, 1990), the alteration of cognition and perception resulting from alcohol (Frieze and Browne, 1989), the batterer’s attempt to find a socially acceptable excuse for his behavior (Coleman and Straus, 1983), or the assaultive partner’s reliance on alcohol as a “time out” (MacAndrew and Edgerton, 1969).
At least one researcher has characterized batterers on the basis of their behaviors, rather than their personality characteristics. Sociopathic batterers are extremely abusive, inflict the most severe injury, and are often violent both inside and outside of the home. In addition, they may have severe substance abuse problems and high rates of previous arrest (Gondolf, 1988). Antisocial abusers inflict less severe injury than the sociopathic abusers. Chronic abusers tend to batter on at least a weekly basis, but the abuse is less severe than that inflicted by either the sociopathic or antisocial abuser. The frequency of battering by sporadic abusers is minimal and is the least severe of the battering. Sporadic batterers tend to be apologetic following each such incident (Gondolf, 1988).

Clinical experience offers some support for this typology. One research group found that approximately 40% of men who presented to their program for treatment had a history of prior criminal behavior and were likely to have assaulted others in addition to their intimate partners (Dutton and Golant, 1995). Unlike individuals who have a conscience and may consequently attempt to minimize the seriousness of their behavior or its consequences, such individuals may be psychopaths. As such, they are unable to visualize another individual’s fear or pain.

A subgroup of antisocial/psychopathic batterers have been labeled “vagal reactors” (Jacobson, 1993). Contrary to the usual autonomic response to stress, which involves an increase in the rate and shallowness of breathing, vagal reactors experience a decrease in their heart rate, becoming calm internally while displaying emotionally aggressive behavior (Jacobson, 1993).

In general, men have been found to display higher rates of violence as the level of commitment in a relationship intensifies, as measured by the length of time in the
relationship and/or the number of dates (Arias, Samios, and O'Leary, 1987; Burke, Stets, and Pirog-Good, 1989; Marshall and Rose, 1987; Rouse, Breen, and Howell, 1988).

Assaultive men have been found to be more likely than assaultive women to take their own lives after killing their partners (Chimbos, 1998). There is also evidence of an association between intimate partner violence and the commission of “suicide by cop,” whereby the assaultive individual purposely disobeys the instructions of police officers to lay down weapons, etc., and thereby intentionally escalates the potential for a lethal encounter, forcing the police to use deadly force to protect other civilians (Hutson, Anglin, Yarbrough et al., 1998). Research on violence also suggests that the violence may be more intense if third parties present during the incident are supportive of the violence (Felson, Ribner, and Siegel, 1984).

_The Battering_

Three phases of the battering dynamic have been identified. The first, or tension-building phase, is often characterized by verbal insults and threats. The recipient’s response is often to try to calm the angered partner. Although this strategy may be effective initially, it soon loses its effectiveness. The abuse that occurs during the second phase, that of uncontrolled verbal and physical abuse, often stuns the receiving partner. The third, or “honeymoon period,” that often follows an act of abuse has been attributed to the batterer’s attempt to thwart the departure of the intimate partner, rather than to any sense of remorse (Steinman, 1990; Vaselle-Augenstein and Ehrlich, 1992). During this last phase, the abusive partner may try to enlist others, such as the children, to assist him plead for forgiveness. He may also threaten to commit suicide in order to convince the
injured woman to remain in the relationship. This last period tends to extend until the assaultive partner feels vulnerable again (Dutton and Golant, 1995).

Men who abuse in this cyclical fashion have been found to be characterized by “the repetitive aspect of their lives and relationships, the emotional poverty of their thought and speech, their flat affect, and noncommittal responses” (Dutton and Golant, 1995: 44). They often obsess on a thought pattern that consists of blame, bad feelings, and fantasized recriminations. These “ruminations” may lead to an escalation of the violence, with an alteration in the assaultive partner’s consciousness and a reduction of social constraints. This results in “deindividuated violence,” in which the assailant is unaware of and unresponsive to cues from the victim and is the sole individual able to stop the violence once it has begun (Dutton and Golant, 1995: 47).

**Men Assaulting Men**

Little research has been conducted on male-male violence in the context of intimate relations. It has been estimated that violence occurs in 10 to 20% of male-male couples (Island and Letellier, 1991). Gay men may lack the awareness of and the language necessary to express their victimization (Letellier, 1994), which is compounded by the relative silence within the gay community with respect to partner violence (see Szymanski, 1991). As an example, one gay man who was assaulted by his partner with a lead pipe and was almost killed inquired of his social worker, “Well, do you really think that was domestic violence?” (Snow, 1992: 61).
WOMEN AND VIOLENCE

Women Assaulting Men

The Women

Relatively little is known about women who batter men, in comparison with what the extent of data relating to assaultive males. Like assaultive male partners, assaultive female partners have been characterized as seeking control. Alcohol use has been associated with the battering (Cook, 1997; Kaufman, Kantor, and Straus, 1987).

The Men

Relatively little is known about men who are the objects of female assault. Many men will publicly deny that abuse has occurred and will often attribute their injuries to unintentional accidents (Cook, 1997). Shame, a fear of ridicule, and a sense of responsibility have been identified as critical in the decision to remain in the relationship (Cook, 1997).

The Battering

A number of studies have found that the rate of violence committed by female partners against their male intimates equals the rate among men against their female intimates (Stets and Straus, 1990; Straus, 1993; Straus, Gelles, and Steinmetz, 1980). The extent to which these assaults reflect women’s attempts to defend themselves from assault is unclear. At least one study, however, concluded that at least 25 to 30% of the violent marriages under study were violent solely because of the wives’ non-defensive attacks (Straus, 1993).
Men, however, are significantly less likely than women to require medical treatment for injuries received as the result of violence inflicted by a female partner (Kaufman, Kantor, and Straus, 1987; Stets and Straus, 1990). Whether their injuries are likely to be more severe than those suffered by women remains unclear (Cook, 1997).

**Women Assaulting Women**

Again, relatively little is known about same-sex violence that involves two women. Researchers have reported that the assaultive partner within a female couple often rely on the myth of mutual battering and homophobic control in conjunction with the violence, in order to maintain control. It is often difficult to understand who is the aggressor and who is the assaulted because the combatants are often perceived as equals (Island and Letellier, 1991; Renzetti, 1992). Homophobic control has been defined as

> [t]hreatening to tell family, friends, employer, police, church, community, etc. that the victim is a lesbian …; telling the victim she deserves all she gets because she is a lesbian; assuring her that no one would believe she has been violated because lesbians are not violent; reminding her that she has no options because the homophobic world will not help her (Hart, 1986: 189).

One study found that almost 25% of the lesbian participants had experienced such threats (Renzetti, 1992).

Alcohol and other substance use has been found to be associated with battering in lesbian couples (Fortunata, 1999; Scarce, 1997). Conflicts around autonomy and dependency have also been noted (Renzetti, 1992).
PATTERNS AND PERCEPTIONS OF PARTNER VIOLENCE AMONG U.S. SUBGROUPS

Clearly, the United States is a multicultural society. As such, we would expect to see variations in rates of violence, attitudes towards violence, and attitudes towards women. Indeed, within the United States the frequency of partner violence appears to vary across subgroups, although insufficient research has been conducted to establish the reasons for this variation. For instance, a study by Cazenave and Straus (1979) found that within a nationally representative sample of African-Americans and non-Hispanic whites, the rates of intimate partner violence were lower among the African-Americans in 3 of 4 income strata, after controlling for race, income, and occupation. They also found that women were less likely to be assaulted if they had a strong family and social network. Hispanic women have been found to be at greater risk of physical violence during marriage as compared with women of other ethnic groups (Straus and Smith, 1990). These findings stand in contrast to those of other studies that have consistently found that the rates of partner violence are similar across racial and/or ethnic groups (Gondolf, Fisher, and McFerron, 1988; Lockhart and White, 1989; Stark, 1990).

A number of studies have found that even when the rates of violence are similar across racial/ethnic groups, the experience of partner violence may differ. For instance, several research groups have found that in comparison with non-Hispanic white women, Hispanic women are more likely to have been the victims of violence for a longer period of time (Gondolf, Fisher, and McFerron, 1988; Torres, 1991). The level of violence suffered by African-American women at the hands of their partners has been found to be
more lethal than that among non-Hispanic whites, even though the incidence rates are similar (Stark, 1990).

Other studies have found that the frequency of violence may vary even within United States subgroups. For instance, although a smaller proportion of African-American women in upper socioeconomic strata report partner violence, they report a higher median number of assaults per year in comparison with African-American women in lower socioeconomic strata. Puerto Rican husbands are 10 times as likely as Cuban husbands to assault their wives (Kantor et al., 1994). Compared to non-Hispanic whites and U.S.-born Mexican-Americans, Mexican-born Mexican-Americans have reported lower rates of partner violence (Sorenson and Telles, 1991). Several research groups have reported that factors such as immigration status, prejudice, a lack of English proficiency, and the lack of emotional support resulting from separation from extended families may contribute to the abuse (Ho, 1990; Perilla et al., 1994).

Despite our knowledge relating to the incidence and prevalence of partner violence and risk factors for partner violence, we actually have relatively little knowledge about how partner violence is viewed within various groups, both within and outside of the United States. One of the few United States studies to examine diverse perspectives found that compared to non-Hispanic white women, Mexican-American women are less likely to classify behavior such as slapping, pushing, shoving, grabbing, and throwing things at them as physical abuse (Torres, 1991). Puerto Ricans appear to have the highest rate of cultural approval of wife assaults as compared to non-Hispanic whites, Cubans, and Mexican-Americans (Kantor et al., 1994), although the reasons for this difference have not been investigated.
A recent ethnography of low-income, predominantly second generation, mainland Puerto Rican adolescents found that both males and females condone the use of physical violence as a punishment for females who were perceived to be sluts, that is, those whose sexual behavior was seen as being similar to males (Asencio, 1999). Females could have intercourse without becoming sluts only if they were truly in love. Accordingly, females who left relationships “too early” or had not sacrificed sufficiently to preserve the relationship were suspected of having engaged in sex out of lust and not out of love. As a result, females often stayed in abusive relationships to protect their reputations and to avoid further violence. In addition, some males believed that a female could not leave a relationship until the male gave her permission to do so. If the female left the relationship and was with a new male partner, she was potentially subject to physical violence from her former partner because she had become a slut (Asencio, 1999).

CONSEQUENCES OF INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

Intimate partner violence may result in serious health consequences and a resulting need for medical attention. In the United States, one or both partners in approximately 500,000 couples sustain injuries from violence each year (Sorenson et al., 1996). Women in the United States make almost three times as many visits to medical providers for the treatment of injuries associated with partner violence as they do for injuries related to motor vehicle accidents (National Committee for Injury Prevention and Control, 1989). Outcomes of partner violence may include damage to joints, partial loss of vision or hearing, burns, bites, hematomas, fractures, cuts or abrasions, inflammation, penetrating puncture wounds, dislocation, sprains, and death (Balakrishnan et al., 1995;
Bates et al., 1995; Beck et al., 1996; Browne and Williams, 1993; Hartzell et al, 1996). Women in abusive relationships have been found to be less likely to use condoms and more likely to experience threats of violence when they discussed condoms, resulting in an increased risk of HIV infection (Wingood and DiClemente, 1997).

Initial psychological responses to partner violence often include shock, denial, withdrawal, confusion, numbing, fear, and depression (Browne, 1987; Dutton, 1992; Hilberman, 1980; Symonds, 1979; Walker, 1979). Long-term effects may include anxiety, fear, fatigue, sleeping and eating disorders, and feelings of loss, betrayal, and/or helplessness (Walker, 1979). Post-traumatic stress disorder is one of the most common psychological consequences (Herman, 1997).

Death is the most severe consequence of intimate partner violence. Research indicates that of all adult women who are murdered, the majority are killed by an intimate or former intimate; of these, the majority were battered before their deaths (Campbell, 1992). A study of the homicides of women in New Mexico found that 46% of the deaths that were investigated were attributable to a male intimate (Arbuckle, Olson, Howard et al., 1996). Studies conducted in New York and Chicago indicate that the leading cause of maternal mortality is trauma; the highest proportion of these traumatic deaths were attributable to homicide (Fildes, Reed, Jones et al., 1992). Additionally, intimate partner violence has been implicated in women’s commission of suicide (Olson, Huylar, Lynch et al., 1999).

Third parties may also experience serious consequences. Several studies have suggested that low infant birthweight may be associated with physical abuse during pregnancy, although the causal pathway remains unclear (Bullock and McFarlane, 1989;
Children who witness the violence may themselves experience anxiety, depression, preoccupation with aggression, suicidal ideation, sleep disorders, headaches, bedwetting, and digestive difficulties, sometimes resulting in social withdrawal and truancy (Attala, Bauza, Pratt, and Viera, 1995; Holden and Ritchie, 1991; Hughes, 1988; Hughes, 1986; Humphreys, 1993).

**SUMMARY**

An examination of more recent data relating to partner violence begins to provide answers as to who is most vulnerable to partner violence and who is most likely to commit acts of violence against their intimate partners. This examination does not, however, begin to address questions relating to the occurrence of partner violence during earlier periods of American history.

Research indicates that women are at higher risk of being targets of partner violence if they are young, pregnant, poor, and use multiple substances. Despite stereotypes depicting battering men as crude, uneducated, neurotic, and domineering, researchers have found that most men who batter their female partners most often act on feelings of insecurity and suffer from feelings of low self-esteem and an excessive need for control; these feelings are often expressed as extreme jealousy. Many men who batter female partners are able to function well in superficial relationships. As with the women who are at greater risk of being battered, men appear to be more likely to batter if they engage in substance use.
Relatively little is known about men who assault their male partners or women who assault their male or female partners. The scant research that has investigated women’s assault of their male partners indicates that this occurs with the same frequency as male assault of female intimates. It has been hypothesized that individuals in same-sex relationships, particularly men, may lack the language that is necessary to express their victimization. Same-sex intimates, like opposite-sex intimates, are more likely to be involved in partner violence if substance use occurs.

Research findings are inconsistent regarding the similarity of rates of partner violence across ethnic groups in the United States. Most have found that the rates appear to be similar, although the experience of the violence may differ.

Partner violence may result in serious physical and emotional consequences to the victim, the assailant, and to third parties, such as children who witness the violence.

An exploration of partner violence as it occurs outside the United States could shed additional light on our understanding of when, how, and why it occurs. First, without knowing more about partner violence outside of the United States, we cannot say for certainty whether its occurrence, the forms of its occurrence, or the severity with which it occurs are peculiar to this country. Second, because the U.S. is a country of relatively great diversity in religion, ethnicity, and sexual orientation, as well as other characteristics, an examination of patterns of partner violence outside of the United States could help us to understand whether the rates of partner violence within specific groups that have migrated to the United States reflect behaviors that individuals brought with them or have developed or intensified since their arrival in the United States. Finally, an
examination of responses to partner violence in other areas of the world can inform the
development of effective interventions in the United States.
CHAPTER THREE

PATTERNS OF PARTNER VIOLENCE: FINDINGS FROM OUTSIDE OF THE UNITED STATES

An examination of partner violence in societies outside of the United States may be critical to inform our understanding of partner violence within the United States. The population of the United States is highly diverse, reflecting innumerable cultural variations. An understanding of partner violence in groups outside of the United States may amplify our understanding of differences in perceptions of partner violence across the cultures within the United States and, in particular, of partner violence within recently-immigrated groups.

INCIDENCE AND PREVALENCE

The incidence and prevalence of partner violence has been found to range widely. The incidence has been found to be 14.4% in Toronto, Canada and 39% in Malaysia (Smith, 1987; Malaysia Women’s AID Organisation, 1992). Wife beating has been found to be infrequent among families in rural areas of northern Thailand (Potter, 1977) and the Mundurucu of South America (Murphy and Murphy, 1974). Wife beating appears to be more frequent and significantly more severe among rural Taiwanese families (Wolf, 1972) and among the Yanomamo of northern Brazil (Chagnon, 1968). Table 1 sets forth the findings from various studies conducted in North America, South America, Europe, Africa, and Asia.
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<th>Authors/Year</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Sample</th>
<th>Findings</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Barragan Alvarado et al., 1992</td>
<td>Quito, Ecuador</td>
<td>convenience sample 299 low SES women</td>
<td>60% beaten by partner; 37% of those beaten assaulted daily for at least one month</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bates et al., 1995</td>
<td>Newcastle, Australia</td>
<td>emergency dept. teaching hospital 401 women ages 17-80</td>
<td>25% reported partner violence at some time; 1.7% at hospital due to current violence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Handwerker, 1993*</td>
<td>Antigua</td>
<td>random subset of national probability sample; 97 women ages 20-45</td>
<td>30% of women battered as adults</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kennedy and Dutton, 1989</td>
<td>Alberta, Canada</td>
<td>1,045 women in Alberta, Canada</td>
<td>11.2% reported husband to wife violence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loue, 2001</td>
<td>Romania</td>
<td>convenience sample 83 women ages 20-65 in Bucharest and Iasi</td>
<td>31.3% had experienced partner violence during lifetime; 10.8% had suffered partner violence during previous year; 4.8% had committed partner violence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mahajan, 1990</td>
<td>India</td>
<td>109 men, 109 women from village in Jullundur District, Punjab</td>
<td>75% of lower caste men admitted beating their wives; 22% of higher caste men admitted beating wives; 75% of lower caste women indicated frequent beatings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mazza et al, 1996</td>
<td>Melbourne, Australia</td>
<td>cross-sectional, questionnaire-based prevalence survey; 15 general practices, 3,026 women &gt;age 18</td>
<td>10% reported severe physical violence during preceding year; 13% reported rape or attempted rape by partner as an adult; 30% victim to some form of sexual abuse after age of 16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raikes, 1990</td>
<td>Kenya</td>
<td>district wide cluster sample from contraceptive prevalence survey; 733 women from Kissi district</td>
<td>42% beaten regularly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ramirez Rodriguez, Uribe Vasquez, 1993</td>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>random household survey women 1163 rural, 427 urban in state of Jalisco</td>
<td>57% of urban, 44% of rural women experienced personal violence; husband initiates violence in 60% of cases</td>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Roberts et al., 1996</td>
<td>Queensland,</td>
<td>Royal Brisbane Hospital emergency dept.; 670 men, 553 women, all &gt;16 years old</td>
<td>8.5% of men, 23.9% of women reported history of adult partner violence</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sheikh-Hashim,</td>
<td>Tanzania</td>
<td>convenience sample from 3 districts</td>
<td>60% reported history of partner violence</td>
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<td>Gebba, 1990</td>
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<tr>
<td>Smith, 1987</td>
<td>Toronto</td>
<td>telephone survey, 604 women</td>
<td>annual incidence 14.4%; prevalence 25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sonali, 1990</td>
<td>Sri Lanka</td>
<td>convenience sample 200 low SES women</td>
<td>60% had been beaten in past; 51% said husbands had used weapons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tham et al., 1995</td>
<td>London, England</td>
<td>184 patients in adult psychiatric services</td>
<td>24% reported suffering past partner violence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wakabi and Mwsigye,</td>
<td>Uganda</td>
<td>house to house written survey; 16 women from each of Kampala's 5 divisions</td>
<td>46% of 73 respondents reported being physically abused by partner currently</td>
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*cited in Heise, et al. 1994; original could not be located
Reports and studies from African countries have consistently reported high rates of partner violence. An increase in the rates of partner violence against women has been reported in Cameroon, South Africa, Angola, Kenya, and Sao Tome in recent years (Green, 1999). In Angola, it has been estimated that one-third of all homicide victims are women who have been killed by their male partners (United States Department of State, 1994, 1995). A report from the United States Department of State (1997) indicated that in Kenya in 1995, approximately 7 women a day were beaten by their partners.

In Zimbabwe, domestic violence has been found to account for more than 60 percent of all murder cases before the Harare High Court. Honor defenses, in which the male assailant justifies his behavior as a response to his honor having been impugned by the victim, are accepted frequently (United States Department of State, 1994, 1995). The government of Zimbabwe has estimated that partner violence occurs in 80 percent of all homes; domestic violence is believed to account for 60 percent or more of all murder cases that go through the courts there (Muchena, 1996).

South African nongovernmental organizations have estimated that one out of every six South African women are in an abusive relationship (Green, 1999). Additionally, it appears from at least one study that more than half of all women murdered in South Africa are killed by their male intimates (Human Rights Watch, 1995). South African newspapers have reported that every six days, a woman is killed by her husband or boyfriend (United States Department of State, 1997).

In 1982, the National Council of Women in Papua New Guinea expressed concern about what seemed to be a serious problem of partner violence (Bradley, 1994). In response, the Law Reform Commission conducted a study to ascertain the extent to
which partner violence was occurring. Findings from a survey of 19 villages in 16 of Papua New Guinea's 19 provinces indicated that 67 percent of the rural wives survey had been hit by their husbands and 66 percent of the rural husbands admitted to having hit their wives. Among urban low-income earners and their spouses, 56 percent of the wives indicated that they had been hit by their husbands and 55 percent of the husbands indicated that they had hit their wives. Among higher earners, 62 percent of women reported having been hit by their husbands. An identical proportion of the husbands reported having hit their wives. Most of the wives were hit more than once a year but less than once a month, except for a small proportion of the urban low wage earners' wives, who were hit much more frequently.

It was also reported in the same study that wife beating is so common that it is seen as a normal part of married life; 57 percent of the rural women, 67 percent of the rural men, 25 percent of urban low income women, and 42 percent of urban low income men "accepted in principle" the practice of wife-beating (Bradley, 1994: 13). These figures are particularly significant since more than 80 percent of the country's population lives in rural areas, where a majority of people appear to experience wife-beating and do not view it as problematic.

The findings of the study were met with varied responses from members of Papua New Guinea's Parliament, ranging from concern to claims that wife beating is a private matter, to assertions that women would not be beaten if they did not deserve it (Bradley, 1994). It has been argued that, in such situations, wife beating constitutes a development issue because (1) men's violence against their female intimates prevents and/or limits the ability of women to participate in development and (2) the violence reinforces women's
economic and social dependency despite programs that seek to improve their living conditions (Bradley, 1994).

In Central America, it has been estimated that one out of every three women will experience violence at the hands of their intimate partner at some time during their lives (Cox, 1994). Studies of battered women indicate that between 30 and 58 percent of the respondents report having been raped by their husbands. A study of 1,000 women in Guatemala concluded that 48 percent had been beaten by their intimate partners, while a study of 10,500 women seeking legal assistance in Nicaragua found that 50 percent were doing so as a result of having been beaten by their partners. It has been estimated that an average of three women are murdered by their intimate partners each month in Honduras (Cox, 1994). A children’s nursery rhyme from Nicaragua is revealing:

Chico Perico
mato a su mujer
la hizo tasajo
y la puso a vender
y no la quisieron
porque era mujer.

Chico perico
killed his wife,
made her into beef jerky,
and put her up for sale
and no one wanted her
because she was female.

(From Woman & Violence Training Manual, used by the Matagalpa Women’s group, Nicaragua, quoted in Cox, 1994: 121).

Both violence by women against their male partners and mutual violence appear to occur significantly less frequently than does violence against female intimates. Levinson (1989) reported that husband-beating occurs in only 26.7% of small-scale societies. In an examination of partner violence across 14 different, non-Western societies, it was found that mutual violence occurred relatively rarely (Campbell, 1992). The reasons for these lower rates are unclear. First, these may reflect what is, in
actuality, occurring. However, understandings of what constitute violence may differ depending upon the individuals involved in the incident. Additionally, many studies examining the occurrence of partner violence are constrained by time boundaries. However, understandings of what may be considered to be partner violence may change over time to encompass incidents not previously classified as signifying partner violence.

PERCEPTIONS OF PARTNER VIOLENCE

Few studies outside of the United States have examined perceptions of behavior that could be classified as partner violence. A study of the attitudes of 50 women in Ghana found that over 60% did not believe that the beating of a husband by his wife was domestic violence (Ofei-Oboagye, 1994). However, all 50 women asserted that domestic violence occurs when a husband hits, slaps, or whips his wife.

Another study that informs us about perceptions of partner violence was conducted among the Garifuna of Central America. Among the Garifuna, wife-beating is not considered a right, but is regarded as “an unfortunate reality” (Kerns, 1992). Violence is believed to result from the intervention of spirits, in addition to men and women. Precursors to wife beating are similar to those in the United States: drinking, arguments about money, and sexual jealousy. Of five instances of wife beating reported within a one year period, two involved the husband pushing the wife subsequent to the wife’s initiation of the violence. The other three cases involved more serious injury, including an attack with a machete.
CAUSES OF PARTNER VIOLENCE

Just as in the United States, partner violence occurring in other locales may come about due to any one or more of a constellation of factors and circumstances. For instance, Loue’s (2001) study of partner violence in Romania, which involved interviews with a convenience sample of 83 women, found that the attributed causes of partner violence were many and varied. Respondents identified the following factors as causes of partner violence: economic difficulties, the use of alcohol, mental illness, the woman’s failure to fulfill her obligations, and personal characteristics of the male partner, such as jealousy or a fear of being vulnerable. Other studies have identified these and other variables as factors in the occurrence of partner violence.

Economic Factors

The recent apparent increase in the rates of partner violence in several African countries (see above) has been attributed to economic pressures. Potash (1995) has asserted that men are finding it increasingly difficult to fulfill their responsibilities to both their immediate and extended family members. Marital strain, and accompanying violence, may result from conflicting obligations, particularly when resources are scarce. Kalu (1993) has asserted that the declining economy in Nigeria has made it difficult for male heads of households to meet their economic obligations, while wives often resent having to bear the economic burden for the family. The ensuing marital quarrels may result in physical violence between the partners.

The now-illegal practices of dowry payments and of sati in India demonstrate how views of violence may differ within a society and may change over time. The dowry
payment itself is said to derive from a provision in Hindu scriptures (Sarkar, 1993). Gradually, the association between the dowry payment and religious scripture has disintegrated and the dowry has become a mechanism for promoting the bride’s social mobility. Husbands’ families may view the dowry as payment for the cost of maintaining an unproductive human being (Divale and Harris, 1976). The Indian economy profits, as well, from the illegal practice; the total annual consumer budget for dowries has been estimated at almost $320 million (Sarkar, 1993). Although the payment of the dowry remains socially acceptable and appears to be even socially mandated, it was made illegal by the Indian government in 1961, due in large part to the association of the dowry payment with violence and with the practice of sati.

The bride may become the target of violence if the groom and/or his family deem the dowry payment inadequate or if it is paid too slowly. The violence may occur shortly after the wedding, or it may occur years later (Sarkar, 1993). Not infrequently, the assailants may include not only the woman’s husband, but also his parents, siblings, and other relatives (Willigen and Channa, 1991). The majority of dowry deaths are committed by dousing the woman with kerosene and setting her on fire, although some deaths have been committed by hanging, poisoning, drowning, or beheading the bride (Prasad, 1994). The frequency of dowry deaths is not insignificant. In 1990, 6.9% of all murder cases were attributable to dowry-related motives (Prasad, 1994).

The practice of sati is related to the dowry payment by a bride’s family to the groom in the context of the Hindu faith. Sati refers to the Hindu ritual whereby a wife follows her deceased husband to death by joining him on his funeral pyre (Hawley, 1994). The ritual itself derives from various Hindu epics, which stress the mythical and
mystical powers of women (Courtright, 1994). Now illegal in India, the practice of sati was once more widespread, particularly in more rural areas of the country. Although relatively few women now end their lives in this manner, the woman who ends her life as a sati ("good woman") continues to be venerated among those who observe the practice (Harlan, 1994).

According to some local customs, the dowry reverts to the family of the bride should she become a childless widow. However, if she dies as a sati, the husband's family will be permitted to retain the dowry payment (Oldenburg, 1994). Critics have charged that many incidents of sati were not performed willingly by the widows, but rather came about after they were drugged and/or dragged by the deceased husbands' families and forcibly placed on the funeral pyre (Hawley, 1994; Oldenburg, 1994). Critics further allege that the practice has been revived by the more powerful castes in order to revitalize their image, their priestly role, and their economic assets, since financial donations are often placed at the site of the sati (Tully, 1991).

Mahatma Gandhi, hearing of an incident of sati, attributed the origin of the practice to male egotism:

If the wife has to prove her loyalty and undivided devotion to her husband, so has the husband to prove his allegiance and devotion to his wife. Yet, we have never heard of a husband mounting the funeral pyre of his deceased wife. It may therefore be taken for granted that the practice of the widow immolating herself at the death of the husband had its origins in superstitions, ignorance, and blind egotism of man (Narasimhan, 1990: 57).

Other researchers have implicated both cultural and psychosocial factors in the occurrence of recent incidents of sati. Sati has been found more likely to occur when the economic powers of women have declined or have been devalued; when the "market
value,” i.e. dowry value, of women is low; and when women have access to economic power within the family but the family relationships have become interest-based because of a breakdown in cultural values (Nandy, 1994). Some women may choose sati to alleviate what they believe is the economic drain that they have caused on a family’s limited resources (Narasimhan, 1990).

The payment by a man of bridewealth for his wife has also been associated with partner violence. It has been reported that many men and women in Mozambique and Botswana view a man’s payment of bridewealth as giving him absolute power and authority over his wife. This includes the right to beat her as he sees necessary (Davison, 1989). Men who have not paid a bridewealth may not be afforded such rights (Heise, 1989; Molokomme, 1986).

**Alcohol**

Women among the !Kung of the Kalahari Desert in Namibia and Botswana were often protected from violence as a result of the group’s general disdain for violence and the nature of the women’s contributions to their families and their community (Draper, 1992). Women were valued for both their reproductive labor and for their assistance in gathering. Because they were so often occupied with these tasks, there were few occasions during which a woman would be outside of public surveillance, thereby reducing the likelihood that she would suffer violence. Two of the four instances of beating that came to the attention of the investigator involved the use of alcohol and the wife’s alleged infidelity and/or flirting with other men who were considered socially superior to their husbands. The investigator postulated that the women had suffered the
beatings because the husbands had been faced with direct sexual competition and retaliation against their wives was significantly less dangerous than retaliation against the competing suitors.

**Domination**

A number of researchers have documented the use of force by husbands as a mechanism to control their wives or to “correct” them. Kalu (1993) has asserted that wife battering is widely used in Nigeria as a mechanism by which to correct the wife’s behavior, particularly where she has been consistently insubordinate in response to the husband’s authority. Ofei-Aboagye (1994) maintains that, according to Ghanaian culture, a husband has the right and duty to secure the Ghanaian culture, which includes the securing of the wife’s obedience and fidelity, through the imposition of discipline if it is deemed necessary. Burbank (1992) reported from her study of an Australian aboriginal community that many of the women viewed men’s aggression as a form of attempted domination, one that was often ineffectual. Burbank speculated that the aggressive attempts were largely ineffectual because the women did not see them as intending to control them; rather, men were aggressive as a means of expressing and displaying their anger. However, the women of the Mayotte community did see the men as being stronger than they were and believed that this difference in strength could be dangerous. However, “rules” appeared to govern the fighting, which often limited the extent of injury that could be inflicted. Public fighting increased the likelihood that someone would intervene before it reached dangerous levels. Similarly, kin were expected to
come to one's assistance in the event that they were being beaten, but were also expected to stop a relative from seriously injuring another individual.

**Other Factors**

As in the United States, women appear to be at increased risk of partner violence during pregnancy. A study in Mexico found that, of 110 women who sought treatment at a specified public hospital, 33 percent had suffered violence by their intimate partners during their pregnancies (Ascencio, 1999).

**Protective Factors**

Results from a survey of 359 women living in Lima, Peru indicated that, during the previous year, 34 percent of poor women and 21 percent of middle class women had experienced physical violence at the hands of their intimate partners (Gonzales de Olarte and Gavilano Llosa, 1999). Fifteen percent of the poor women and 13 percent of the middle class women indicated that they had suffered physical harm as a result of the physical violence. The researchers found that the following factors were significantly associated with the occurrence of physical partner violence within a household: the male partner's employment status, the woman's marital status (married versus cohabiting), whether the woman was able to recount her situation to family or friends, and whether the woman was able to receive assistance from family or friends. Women who were married, in higher income households, with family and friends available for support were found to be significantly less likely to suffer physical violence from their intimates.
SUMMARY

Research findings are consistent with those from the U.S.: partner violence exists across cultures and groups, with variations in frequency and severity. As in the U.S., partner violence has been found to be associated with various factors, including substance use and economic strain. The commonality of specific themes across studies—economic difficulties, the societal vulnerability of women, the fact that partner violence occurs at all—may reflect a commonality across women’s experiences in relationships, irrespective of culture religion, political structure, or geographical boundary. Research from outside of the U.S. indicates that perceptions of what constitutes partner violence or abuse varies across groups.

Despite this commonality of experience, however, a comparison of findings from the United States and other countries indicates that, although factors such as economic strain, alcohol use, and a political and cultural context that allows men the freedom to control their female partners may increase the risk of partner violence, they do not by themselves bring about violence. For instance, there are poor women whose partners use alcohol who do not suffer beatings. It is critical to the prevention of partner violence, then, that we understand not only the similarities in the violence across cultures, but also the reasons that underlie the differences. An examination of the prevalent theories of partner violence may help in this inquiry.
CHAPTER FOUR
THE CAUSES OF PARTNER VIOLENCE: THEORY

Various theories have been advanced in an attempt to understand and to explain the basis for behaviors such as those described above—Alma’s mother being beaten, Alma’s father beating her mother, and Alma as the child-witness who later is beaten herself by a partner—the variations in the frequency and nature of partner violence across groups and cultures, and variations in response to partner violence when it does occur. These theories can be classified by (1) the attribution of responsibility for the behavior (individual, couple, or societal) and (2) the primary factors on which the theory relies (cultural, biological, situational, and/or psychosocial). It is important to note that many of the theories may implicate multiple factors; however, the table below indicates those factors that are critical to each particular theory. It is also true that many of the theories may implicate various levels of responsibility, since ultimately it is the individual who commits the abuse or violence and another individual who is the recipient of such behavior. This behavior occurs within the dynamic of a couple, within the setting of a particular society. However, each theory has a particular level of responsibility as its focus, and that is the level that is indicated below. Each theory is discussed only briefly, as a full discussion of each theory is beyond the scope of this dissertation.
Table 2. Causal Theories of Partner Violence and Abuse

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<tr>
<th>Factors Emphasized</th>
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**CULTURAL THEMES**

A number of theories implicate the role of culture or society in the occurrence and/or re-occurrence of partner violence. Patriarchy theory posits that wife assault is a form of domination and social control of women by men, that assault is committed by men who believe that patriarchy is their right, and that the use of violence to maintain male dominance continues because it is acceptable to society. Wolfgang and Ferracuti (1967), in advancing the culture of violence theory, have theorized that in large, pluralistic societies, some subcultures develop norms that permit the use of physical force or violence to a greater degree than does the dominant culture. The difference between these theories lies in (1) the implicit assumption of patriarchy that it is women who are beaten by men and not the reverse and (2) the assumption embedded in the culture of
violence theory that even if the dominant culture sanctions this behavior, one or more existing subcultures sanctions the use of violence to an even greater degree. Implicit in both theories, however, is the assumption that violence, at least in some circumstances, reflects an accepted norm. Consequently, this demands an examination into both the formation and maintenance of norms and the circumstances in which behavior will be considered to be "outside of the norm," that is, deviant and consequently not tolerated at all or to the same degree.

A "norm" has been defined as

a rule or standard that governs our conduct in the social situations in which we participate. It is a societal expectation. It is a standard to which we are expected to conform whether we actually do so or not (Bierstedt, 1963: 222).

A rule, standard, or pattern for action...Social norms are rules for conduct. The norms are standards by reference to which behavior is judged and approved or disapproved. A norm in this sense is not a statistical average of actual behavior but rather a cultural (shared) definition of desirable behavior (Williams, 1968: 204).

Edgerton (1985: 24) has explained that

rules may differ in the extent to which they are known, recognized, accepted as just or proper, and uniformly applied to members of the society. Rules also vary in the severity of sanctions that may be incurred by their violations as well as for their consistency of enforcement. They may vary in the degree to which they are internalized, in the mode of their transmission, and in the amount and kind of conformity they receive.

The violation of some norms may be excused, depending upon the account or explanation offered by the norm-violator (Edgerton, 1976; Scott and Lyman, 1968). Deviance, then, constitutes only those deviations from norms which are in a disapproved direction and of sufficient degree to exceed the tolerance limits of a social group such that the deviance elicits, or is likely to elicit if detected, a negative sanction (Clinard and Meier, 1979: 14).
Accordingly, it appears that whether behavior will be considered to be deviant ultimately depends both on the strength of the referent norm and the response of those viewing and judging the behavior that challenges that norm. Ultimately, whether or not an act is deviant depends on how others who are socially significant in power and influence define the act. One could commit any act, but it is not deviant in its social consequences if no elements of society react to it (Bell, 1971: 11).

deviance is not a property inherent in certain forms of behavior; it is a property conferred upon these forms by the audience which directly or indirectly witness them (Erikson, 1962: 308).

One would expect that individuals and societies that view Alma’s father’s behavior as deviant would respond to such occurrences differently than would those that view Alma’s mother’s behavior as deviant. Still others would be expected to respond differently if neither party’s conduct were perceived as deviant in some aspect. These possibilities are explored below in the context of a discussion relating specifically to responses to partner violence.

An examination of the history of partner violence and responses to partner violence within the United States lends some support to culturally-premised theories. For instance, during the greater part of U.S. history, men’s control over their wives was explicitly condoned by such key institutions as law enforcement, courts, and the law itself. The women who were beaten were viewed as the transgressors, rather than the men who effectuated the beatings. Professionals in the fields of psychiatry, psychology, and social work similarly viewed the battered woman as either the culpable party, due to either the commission or omission of an act or response, or as the deviant, i.e. masochistic, member of the dyad, who enjoyed the violence; in either scenario, it was the woman who acted as the *provocateur* of the attack. Attitudes reflecting a higher valuation...
of men as compared to women were also evident in other aspects of life, including wages and employment, the proliferation of pornography, and the medicalization of partner violence. (These aspects of male-female relations are discussed in greater detail in chapter 5.)

Theories with a predominantly cultural theme provide a significant framework to understand why partner violence, and specifically male on female partner violence, occurs within a specific culture. However, it is often unclear from the writings why partner violence does not occur more frequently if it is culturally condoned. The culturally-oriented theories fail to consider, in addition, individual, dyadic, and situational factors that may bear on the use of violence within a relationship. Regardless of whether or not violence is sanctioned in a particular culture, it is ultimately an individual choice to use it or to refrain from its use. Patriarchy theory, in particular, fails to explain why violence occurs within same-sex couples or why women batter men. In fact, it fails to acknowledge even the possibility that women may utilize non-defensive violence within an intimate relationship.

Patriarchy theory appears to oversimplify the development of male identity and the drive for power (Lichterman, 1986). Patriarchy theory assumes a symmetry between the public and the private spheres of a woman’s existence. In the public domain, women as a group lack power in relation to men. This dynamic is mirrored in the private arena, where women often feel vulnerable and afraid. However, there is no such symmetry for men. In the public arena, men as a group possess power, although the extent of their power varies over subgroups. On an individual basis, however, men may often feel that they lack power and are, in fact, substantially at the mercy or demand of many others,
such as employers, partners, and even their own children (Lichterman, 1986). In fact, though, many of the individuals to whom men are responsible and who direct men’s activities are themselves men, such as employers. Men’s relationships and interactions, then, are structured around power and differential access to individual and group power. (This dynamic is explored in greater detail in chapter 5.)

**PSYCHOSOCIAL THEMES**

Unlike theories that focus on the cultural bases for violence, those that reflect psychosocial themes focus on the behavior of one or both members of the intimate dyad. Whereas culture-focused theories fail to recognize the micro-level factors that may be relevant to the occurrence of partner violence, many of the psychosocial theories fail to acknowledge the importance of the larger culture and societal institutions in encouraging or tolerating the violence when it does occur.

The “aberrant male” hypothesis relies heavily on deviance theory, as explained above, for its foundation. Basically, this approach views men who batter as examples of the “few bad apples” who constitute a distinct minority among men. The primary emphasis of this approach is the identification and punishment of the offending males, with little attention focused on the underlying causes of the aberration or its prevalence (Brooks and Silverstein, 1995).

The investment and resource theories both focus on the interaction within the dyadic relationship. Both examine the dyadic relationship in the context of various situational factors and each involves a cost-benefit analysis. According to the investment theory, commitment to a relationship is a function of anticipated relationship satisfaction,
the negative function of the attractiveness of perceived alternatives, and a positive function of the amount that has already been invested in a relationship. These investments can be intrinsic, such as the time already invested in the relationship and the amount of time spent together, or extrinsic, such as the development of mutual social and family networks and shared possessions and activities. One's willingness to remain in a relationship increases as the balance of the rewards over costs of staying in the relationship exceeds the balance of the rewards over costs involved in alternative relationships (Rusbult, 1980, 1983).

In contrast, the resource theory focuses on the value of the resources that each person brings to the relationship and the extent of their control of resources outside the relationship. It has been hypothesized that the more control and individual has of resources outside of the family, such as money, contacts, and prestige, the less likely he or she will be to utilize violence as a means of exercising decision making control within the family (Blood and Wolfe, 1960; Goode, 1971).

The exchange theory is particularly interesting because it again reflects reliance on a cost-benefit analysis, positing that people will use violence to achieve their goals as long as the benefits of this behavior outweigh the costs. However, this cost-benefit analysis is situated in the context of a larger culture. Gelles (1983: 157) has stated, "People hit and abuse other family members because they can." Because nuclear family living arrangements tend to isolate the family from the larger society, violence may appear cost-free to the perpetrator. Consistent with this focus on the larger cultural context, Lambeck (1992) found that the people of Mayotte consider spousal abuse inappropriate and wrong; the battering husband is subject to social censure.
Like the exchange and resource theories, the theory of marital power focuses on the individual characteristics of each member of the intimate dyad and the dynamic between these members. According to this theory, partners who lack power as it is defined by this theory will be more likely to abuse their partners.

Power, according to this theory, is conceived of as power bases, power processes, and power outcomes. "Power bases" refers to the assets and resources that provide the basis for one person's domination over the other. These can include knowledge, skills, personal assets, and connections, in addition to the cultural attribution of authority to a particular party within the relationship. Power processes consist of the interactional techniques that each dyadic member employs to gain control; examples include negotiation, assertiveness, and problem-solving. Power outcome refers to who actually makes the decision (Cromwell and Olson, 1975). As an example, abuse would be more likely to occur in situations in which one partner's stronger power basis (knowledge, skill, and so forth) and/or more adept power processes (such as negotiation skills or verbal skills) threaten the other partner's sense of control. According to this theory, the cultural attribution of power in a heterosexual relationship in U.S. culture appears to reside with the male partner (Cromwell and Olson, 1975). The originators of the theory appear to be silent with respect to abuse in the context of same-sex relationships.

Serra (1993: 24) has argued that the concept of the power base should be extended to encompass the choice to use or not use violence. He posits that violence signifies power when it is acted out by a man, but powerlessness when it is acted out by a woman. Consequently,

There is no moral code or reason for a "norm: forbidding woman's violence toward a man." Therefore, while a man's nonaggression toward
a woman expresses a norm inscribed in our morals and in our culture, a woman’s nonviolence toward a man appears to be a form of nonpower, a consequence of the biological fact that she is unable to overcome him. A man’s nonviolence toward a woman takes on a sense of his “not wanting to”—a moral choice. A man who does not react to a woman’s blows by beating her shows respect for the other sex, while a woman who—having been hit by a man—does not react by attacking him, gives only an impression of powerlessness. Hence, neither violence, nor nonviolence, are reciprocal. (Italics in original.)

Although Serra considers the impact of culture on the meaning of violence, the theory of marital power is similar to other psychosocial perspectives in ignoring the larger role of culture in permitting or tolerating the violence, and the establishment and maintenance of societal structures and processes that reflect this tolerance.

Social learning theory also emphasizes the importance of individual and couple characteristics in the occurrence of partner violence. Similar to exchange theory, social learning theory considers the impact of societal characteristics on the individual and the family. Unlike the theories categorized as primarily cultural in orientation, social learning theory does not extend responsibility for the violence to the culture. Rather, social learning theory posits that in the context of specific situational factors, such as substance abuse or financial difficulties, key factors related to the individual and/or the couple may give rise to partner violence within a particular societal framework (O’Leary, 1988). Social learning theory has been used to explain the “intergenerational transmission” of child abuse (Ballard et al., 1980; Egeland et al., 1988; Davis and Leitenberg, 1987; Kaufman and Zigler, 1987).

Unlike many of the psychosocial theories that focus primarily on the behavior of the apparent batterer, traumatic bonding theory seeks to explain why women stay with the men who beat them. Two factors are identified which are said to be characteristic of all
such relationships: a power imbalance within the relationship that causes the batterer to perceive himself as dominated by the other partner and the intermittent nature of the abuse (Dutton and Painter, 1993, 1981). The theory postulates that, over time, the power imbalance magnifies. As it does, the dominant person develops an inflated sense of his or her own power while concomitantly, the subjugated party feels increasingly negative about him- or herself and, consequently, becomes increasingly dependent on the dominator. Interim periods between the intermittent episodes of abuse consist of attention and declarations of love and remorse, resulting in a willingness on the part of the abused partner to forgive and forget and the establishment of a behavior pattern that is difficult to extinguish (Rounsaville, 1978).

Power and power imbalance consistently emerge as a theme in both the culture-based and the psychosocial theories of partner violence. The culture based theories essentially attribute the violence to a culturally-sanctioned imbalance of power among men and women, which is reflected at both the societal and the dyadic levels. In contrast, the psychosocial theories attribute the violence, in general, to power imbalances within the dyadic relationship; the violence that flows from this imbalance may then be tolerated by the larger society. Both the cultural and the psychosocial perspectives implicate multiple levels for the initiation and the maintenance of partner violence; it is the level of primary attribution that differs.

**BIOLOGICAL THEMES**

Both biological and psychological evolution have been advanced to explain the occurrence of violence. The biological perspective, which argues that the presence of
testosterone in men is responsible for the tendency to engage in violent behavior, is 
premised on several generalizations about primate behavior: primate males are more 
aggressive than females; males dominate females; males have only short-term bonds with 
sexually receptive females; and males are uninvolved with females. However, more 
recent observations of primate behavior have noted that female influence is as important 
as male dominance, that males and females may maintain long-term affiliative 
relationships, and that the amount of male involvement varies (Haraway, 1989; Smuts, 
Cheney, Seyfarth et al., 1987).

Originally advanced by anthropologists (Rohner, 1975; Narroll, 1970; Lenski and 
Lenski, 1970; Barry et al., 1967), evolutionary theory posits that as societies have 
become increasingly complex structurally and economically, families have become 
increasingly smaller and nuclear in form and paradoxically more structured and more 
ambiguous. Societies that maintain a hierarchically organized social structure and that 
are characterized by a large amount of activity through social encounters outside of the 
home are said to place a high value on obedience. The failure of a partner to be obedient 
results, it is hypothesized, in violence.

Wilson and Daly (1993) have advanced an evolutionary psychological 
perspective, arguing that the sexual proprietariness of the human male constitutes a 
psychological adaptation that allows him to lay claim to his “territory,” the female who is 
deemed to be of high reproductive value. They have argued that our society recognizes 
this evolutionary mandate through its maintenance of double standards for adultery, 
whereby women are more likely to be penalized socially; in legal actions that permit a 
man to recover monetary damages for the loss of his wife’s consortium; and in the
coercive, nonviolent control of women by men through the establishment and perpetuation of economic inequity.

The evolutionary perspective reflects several significant weaknesses. First, the theory—whether biological or psychological—ignores diversity among men and women and is premised on a remarkably limited view of human history. In addition, the emphasis on evolution—whether biological or psychological—relegates humans to a constant state of unawareness of the basis for their behavior. Behaviors no longer constitute a response, but are in essence a reaction to underlying drives of which we have no awareness. The institutions and systems that are identified as reflective of these underlying drives—double standards for adulterous behavior and the perpetuation of economic inequities, for instance—must then result, as well, from these unconscious, species-wide drives. The concept of conscious intention becomes, then, almost meaningless and nonessential. And, if we are to accept the premise that the violence derives from evolutionary-mandated needs, is it possible at all, then, to view partner violence as deviant and to hold individuals accountable for such behaviors? Several commentators have noted the dangers inherent in an adoption of this perspective:

For evolutionary psychologists, everything—from men’s propensity to rape to our alleged preference for grassy scenery—derives from our mythical origin in the African savanna. In its prioritizing explanations of, for instance, rape as a device for sexually unsuccessful men to propagate their genes, it is completely unable to explain why most men don’t rape.... We argue that the theory’s all-embracing sound-bites are for the most part not just mistaken, but culturally pernicious [because] these new fundamentalists assert that their view of human nature should inform the making of social and public policy (Rose and Rose, 2000).
MULTIFACTORAL THEMES

Several multifaceted theories have been developed that link violence within the family to a broader social and/or cultural environment. Unlike theories such as exchange theory, for instance, the larger environment contributes significantly more than merely serving as a backdrop that permits the occurrence of partner violence; rather, the larger environment is a critical element in the occurrence and recurrence of partner violence.

As an example, the ecological theory operates at 4 levels: the family history of the partners (ontogenic); the family setting in which the violence occurs (microsystem); the formal and informal social networks in which the family participates (ecosystem); and the larger culture (macrosystem) (Belsky, 1980; Bersani and Chen, 1988). Similarly, general systems theory posits that family violence results from a positive, complex feedback system that operates at the individual, family, and societal levels (Straus, 1978). As such, relevant factors include the level of conflict within a family, the level of violence within the larger society, family socialization to violence, cultural norms legitimizing violence, the sexist organization of society, and the reasons underlying an individual’s tolerance of violence.

These theories address the failure of many of the other theories to consider the multiple levels at which pressures, incentives, and disincentives may operate to permit partner violence to occur and to continue. However, specifically because of their complexity, reliance on these theories may not be expedient in developing preventive interventions or understanding which factors are most in need of immediate remediation.

The interactive gender role strain/conflict paradigm offers yet another model. Unlike many of the previously-mentioned theories, which derive from a sociological or
feminist studies perspective, gender role strain reflects a men's studies perspective (Brooks and Silverstein, 1995). This paradigm, representing an integration of cultural and psychosocial themes, argues that (1) gender differences are the result of cultural pressures placed on individuals to conform to gender role norms (O'Neil, Helms, Gable et al., 1986); (2) men have been socialized to be aggressive in order to fulfill the rather restrictive but traditional roles of provider and protector and, as a result, have been required to relinquish a personal definition of self in favor of a pseudo-self; (3) men are violent (a) because they have been oversocialized to a traditional masculine role that prescribes aggressive behavior as a component of masculinity and (b) the relinquishment of a personal definition of self results in a chronic state of anxiety and feelings of inadequacy so that (4) when confronted by feelings of dependency, a fear of abandonment, or the possibility of humiliation (Kingman, 1995; Lansky, 1993) that threaten their gender role (5) in the context of a society that accords privilege to men, (6) men attempt to resolve these uncomfortable feelings through the use of violence against women (Brooks and Silverstein, 1995).

This theory, as with the other multifactorial theories, provides a comprehensive framework for the examination of partner violence. Like the culturally-premised theories, interactive gender role strain/conflict paradigm posits that gender differences result from cultural pressures to conform to gender role norms and that men have been socialized to be aggressive in order to fulfill the roles of provider and protector. This paradigm departs from culturally-oriented theories in its emphasis on the internal processes of men in our culture. For instance, patriarchy theory asserts that men who assault believe that patriarchy is their right and that society permits the continuation of
male dominance through, for instance, the assault of their partners. Patriarchy theory does not explore the internal dynamic of such men when they perceive that their control is being challenged. Accordingly, both patriarchy theory and the interactive gender role strain/conflict paradigm begin with a cultural perspective and ultimately arrive at the same endpoint—battering within a relationship—but the course that each theory takes to get there differs.

SUMMARY

Numerous theories have been developed in an attempt to understand and to explain why individuals commit violent acts against their intimate partners and why the individuals who are targets of these behaviors respond as they do. These theories can be classified by their thematic approach as primarily cultural, psychosocial, biological, or multifactoral. The attribution of responsibility for the violence varies across theories and may focus on individual, couple, situational, and/or societal/systemic factors. Although the specific mechanism differs across theories, almost all of the theories recognize sex-and/or gender-associated differences as a critical component in explaining violence between male and female intimates.

There exists a congruence between these theories and the findings of empirical research regarding the causes of partner violence. For instance, the exchange theory posits that people will use violence to achieve their goals as long as the benefits outweigh the costs; this analysis, however, is situated in a larger cultural context. In India, a husband’s murder of his wife as a means of terminating the marriage and retaining the dowry that was paid brings several tangible benefits, including the retention of the money.
and goods that were transferred in conjunction with the marriage and the ability to wed again, with the accompanying possibility of yet another dowry. Absent a careful investigation by law enforcement of the circumstances that attend a wife’s “suicide” by fire, for instance, and the enforcement of laws prohibiting wife battering, there may be few costs associated with the disposition of one’s wife in this manner. To give yet another example, the ecological theory posits that factors operating at the ontogenic, microsystemic, ecosystemic, and macrosystemic levels operate to bring about partner violence. Empirical research indicates that factors such as a family history of violence, the dynamics between the members of the dyad (for instance, the use of substances and the couple’s economic resources), the availability of familial and social supports, and the extent to which the larger society is willing to tolerate instances of partner violence are all implicated in the occurrence of partner violence.

Each of the theories described posits that there exist imbalances in the power distribution within intimate relationships, although the reasons for those imbalances vary across theories. An examination of these imbalances requires a discussion relating to gender and gender roles. Because this dissertation research is conducted in the United States, the discussion of gender role development that follows similarly focuses on gender role in the United States.
CHAPTER FIVE

THE STATUS OF WOMEN AND MEN IN U.S. SOCIETY

CONSTRUCTING GENDER

Understanding the status of men and women in a particular society may be critical to understanding both why partner violence occurs within that society and what form a response might require in order to be effective. For instance, if the larger environment appears to negatively sanction the use of partner violence, then reliance on a culture-based theory, such as patriarchy theory, to understand the causes of the violence and to guide the search for an effective intervention would be misplaced. An examination of status rests on an understanding of how gender is initially constructed and subsequently maintained.

The process of gender construction begins at birth, with the assignment of a sexual category on the basis of the infant’s genitalia (Lorber, 2003). This sex category becomes a gender through name, dress, and the use of other culturally recognizable gender markers. Once a child’s gender is evident, it has been argued, the child is treated differently based upon that gender and then respond to the different treatment by feeling and behaving differently.

Various investigations have found that the concepts of masculinity and femininity are often viewed as opposite ends of a spectrum and that what is not masculine is feminine and vice versa (Deaux and Lewis, 1984; Foushee, Helmreich, and Spence, 1979; Major, Carnavale, and Deaux, 1981). Deaux (1987) has argued that specific
defining characteristics of males and females, such as the female’s ability to bear children and the male’s greater strength and stature, support these conceptualizations.

Jay has argued that gender “is a process of creating distinguishable social statuses for the assignment of rights and responsibilities.” However, it may also serve as a system of stratification: “that which is defined, separated out, isolated from all else is A and pure. Not-A is necessarily impure, a random catchall, to which nothing is external except A and the principle of order that separates it from Not-A” (Jay, 1981: 45). From an individual perspective, he or she is the A and those of the other category are the Not-A. From society’s viewpoint, however, one gender signifies the referent normal and that which is different is deemed to be lesser and subordinate. The extent of the resulting inequality based on gender varies across time and place. Gender serves as a structure to (1) legitimize those who are in authority, (2) divide responsibilities in employment and in the home, and (3) shape and realize sexual desire (for instance, whether relationships are consensual or coercive, and who gives and who receives pleasure) (Connell, 2001). The devalued gender will have, on the whole, less power, less prestige, and fewer economic rewards than the gender that is more highly valued (Lorber, 2003). The very brief account in chapter 1 of partner violence in the U.S., for instance, reflects the reliance on gender to legitimize the authority of males over their female partners in the home.

It is important to recognize, however, that people are not passively shaped by their environments. Rather, individuals are implicated in the construction of their own personalities and identities, both in the ways that they participate in their own subordination and in the ways in which they resist subordination, although much of these processes may be unconscious (Bem, 1979; Benjamin, 1988). Both masculine and
feminine identity, then, are formulated through the interaction of internal processes and social environment (Haug, 1987; Levinson et al., 1978). Deaux (1979: 301) has argued that in examining this complex process and the resulting conceptualizations of masculinity and femininity, researchers “have unidimensionalized that which is multidimensional, and have conveyed a sense of stability and permanence to that which is inherently flexible.”

DEFINING MEN AND MASCULINITY IN THE U.S.

Defining a “man,” apart from a biological definition that incorporates hormone levels, chromosomes, and genital organs, is inextricably linked to our definition of “masculinity” (Whitehead and Barrett, 2001). “Masculinities” have been defined as those behaviours, languages and practices, existing in specific cultural and organizational locations, which are commonly associated with males and thus culturally defined as not feminine. So masculinities exist as both a positive, inasmuch as they offer some means of identity signification for males, and as a negative, inasmuch as they are not the ‘Other’ (feminine) (Whitehead and Barrett, 2001: 15-16).

The more positive traits associated with masculinity include a willingness to sacrifice self for family; loyalty, dedication, and commitment; the ability to solve problems and the willingness to take risks to do so; and self-reliance, fortitude, persistence, and calm (Levant, 1995). And, although conceptions of masculinity vary across different American subgroups, is has been asserted that there is a core which is common to most: courage, endurance and toughness, lack of squeamishness when confronted with shocking or distasteful stimuli, avoidance of display in weakness in general, reticence about emotional or idealistic matters, and sexual competency (Stouffer, Lumsdaine, Lumsdaine et al., 1976).
Manhood in the United States, then, has been defined through various restrictive, societally-imposed edicts:

1. “No Sissy Stuff.” One may never do anything that even remotely suggests femininity. Masculinity is the relentless repudiation of the feminine.
2. “Be a Big Wheel.” Masculinity is measured by power, success, health, and status. As the saying goes, “He who has the most toys wins when he dies.”
3. “Be a Sturdy Oak.” Masculinity depends on remaining calm and reliable in crises, holding emotions in check. In fact, proving you’re a man depends on never showing your emotions at all. Boys don’t cry.

Similarly, the “masculine mystique” emphasizes restrictive emotionality, health care problems, obsession with achievement and success, restricted sexual and affectionate behavior, and concerns about power, control, competition, and homophobia (O’Neil, 1982). The “elements” of the male role have been said to include “the anti-feminine element,” the “success element,” the “aggressiveness elements,” and the “sexual element” (Doyle, 1989).

It has been argued that, as a consequence, the birthright of every American male is a chronic sense of personal inadequacy (Woolfolk and Richardson, 1978) and that men’s true fear “is not fear of women but of being ashamed or humiliated in front of other men, or being dominated by stronger men” (Leverenz, 1986: 451). If this is, indeed, true, then homophobia has little to do with homosexual experience and everything to do with, as one man stated,

the fear that other men will unmask us, emasculate us, reveal to us and the world that we do not measure up, that we are not real men. We are afraid to let other men see that fear. Fear makes us ashamed, because the recognition of fear in ourselves is proof to ourselves that we are not as manly as we pretend…. (Kimmel, 2003: 104).
It has been hypothesized that, as a result, the development of male gender identity involves the construction of positional identities, whereby a sense of the self is solidified through separation from others (Chodorow, 1978). This stands in sharp contrast to the development of female gender identity, which often involves the definition of self through one's connections with others (Gilligan, 1982). For men who both fear and desire connection with others, organized sports provides a mechanism for interaction, while still focusing on hierarchical position, e.g., being number one (Messner, 2003).

The establishment of positional identity is evident in other domains, as well. One psychiatrist commented:

Men become depressed because of loss of status and power in the world of men. It is not the loss of money, or the material advantages that money could buy, which produces the despair that leads to self-destruction. It is the “shame,” the “humiliation,” the sense of personal “failure”.... A man despairs when he has ceased being a man among men (Gaylin, 1992: 32).

Accordingly, this process of establishing and asserting one's identity is said, then, to explain much of heterosexual male behavior in the United States: men must act in a way that eliminates any possibility that others will get the “wrong idea”: withholding any expression of feelings, displaying sexual predation with women, walking and talking in a specified manner (Kimmel, 2003). There are, however, exceptional situations in which men are permitted to behave in ways that, under other circumstances, would negate their masculinity. Depictions of war, for instance, allow men to hold and comfort each other (Easthope, 1986).

It has been argued, though, that the establishment of a male identity has become increasingly difficult for men due to relatively recent profound changes in men's situations: women's increasing exercise of choice in relationships, divorce, and child-
bearing; the decreasing likelihood that men will enjoy a secure, life-long career or employment situation; the increasing number of dual-income households in lieu of households where the male is the sole breadwinner; and the increasing visibility of groups once relegated to society’s margins, such as gay men, women, and persons of color (Whitehead and Barrett, 2001).

Violence, it has been asserted, or the willingness to engage in violence, constitutes one mechanism for the establishment of manhood and masculinity or, in other words, positional identity (Gilligan, 2001; Kimmel, 2003). This is reflected in the observation that the insults most shaming to men are those that challenge the existence or the extent of their courage or manliness, including their sexual adequacy: “wimp,” “coward,” “sissy,” “fairy” (Gilligan, 2001: 571). One writer observed:

Little boys learn the connection between violence and manhood very early in life. Fathers indulge in mock prize fights and wrestling matches with eight-year-olds. Boys play cowboys and Indians with guns and arrows proffered by their elders. They are gangsters or soldiers interchangeably—the lack of difference between the two is more evident to them than to their parents. They are encouraged to “fight back,” and bloodied noses and black eyes become trophies of their pint-sized virility (Komisar, 1976).

In contrast to men, women are shamed by insults that allude to their being too much like men: too independent, too aggressive; transposed into a sexual context, this becomes a “bitch,” “whore,” “tramp,” or “slut.” Not surprisingly, in a survey of both men and women, men expressed their greatest fear as being laughed at. In contrast, women’s greatest fear was of being raped and murdered (Noble, 1992). It is of note that the term “cuckhold,” meaning an inability to control one’s partner’s sexuality, is applied exclusively to men, whereas the term “promiscuous” is used almost exclusively to refer to women’s behavior (Gilligan, 2001).
Several researchers have concluded that a feeling of shame is critical to the use of violence. First an individual is shamed, for instance, as the result of an insult. This shaming engenders a sense of worthlessness, which is transformed into rage and expressed as violence (Scheff and Retzinger, 1991). Violence is perceived as the only means available by which to restore the self-respect that is lost due to the shame (Gilligan, 2001). Empirical research tends to provide support for this conclusion. Interviews conducted in conjunction with an analysis of 70 murders committed in one California county during the period from 1963 through 1972 indicated that the men who had murdered interpreted violence as the only way that they could save face (Luckenbill, 1977).

Exclusionary devices offer an additional route for the establishment and maintenance of a positional hierarchy. Through exclusion, those deemed less manly are relegated to lower positions in the hierarchy—women, gay men, men of color, non-native-born men, men of lower socioeconomic status. Those men deemed to be less “manly” reflect subordinate and marginal masculinities (Whitehead and Barrett, 2001). Through exclusion, “manhood” embodies sexism, racism, and homophobia (Kimmel, 2003).

WOMEN IN U.S. SOCIETY

Defining Femininity

Notman (1982: 4) explained that “Femininity is very difficult to define because the word is used in a number of ways. It can be used descriptively, normatively, diagnostically, clinically, and colloquially.” Early concepts of femininity, such as those
espoused by Freud and Deutsch, consisted of a triad of characteristics: passivity, masochism, and narcissism (Deutsch, 1944, 1945; Freud, 1961). More recent psychoanalytic thought has been careful to distinguish between gender identity, gender role, and the qualities of masculinity and femininity (Notman, 1982).

In contrast to this psychoanalytic perspective, Bartky (1990: 65) has argued that

We are born male or female, but not masculine or feminine. Femininity is an artifice, an achievement, 'a mode of enacting and reenacting received gender norms which surface as so many styles of the flesh’ (quoting Butler, 1985: 11).

Femininity, according to Jay (1981) has been said to represent the not-masculinity, the not-A. This view has been reflected in popularly marketed literature. For instance, a 1948 book explained to teen-age girls that “the normal boy is attracted to the completely feminine girl” and the “normal girl” likes “a man who is completely masculine, the direct opposite of you” (Bryant, 1948, emphasis in original).

The ideal depiction of the feminine girl was represented at one time by the figure of Jane in the dyad of Dick and Jane, the characters who first appeared in all of the stories in the 1930 Elson Basic reader pre-primer. It has been estimated that by 1950, 80% of all first-graders in the United States were learning to read by growing up with Dick and Jane (Kismaric and Heiferman, 1996).

Dick of Dick and Jane embodied the ideal of the all-American boy: confident, direct, responsible, organized, in control, resourceful, and well-behaved. Jane, on the other hand, never quite measured up to the same standard. She has something new to wear on every page; in fact, her dresses never wrinkled and never dirtied. Jane never sulked and never lost her temper. Her hair was not too curly, but not too straight; Jane was not too fat, but not too thin. Jane reflected what girls should be: “The ideal middle-
class girl of the 1950s was ladylike and wore dresses everywhere, accessorized with hats, shoes, purses and clean white gloves to create a total ‘look’” (Kismaric and Heiferman, 1996: 26). While Dick was a character of substance, with real personality and strength, Jane was a superficial soul, delighted to look pretty and look wistfully on while Dick accomplished his successes. Little Sally, the baby of the family, depicted yet another aspect of the feminine: the doll baby who was always active, unthinkingly creating difficulties, and making people laugh with her antics. Jane and Sally were both blondes, unlike Dick, who was dark-haired.

Mother of the Dick and Jane series reflected similar features. Mother was blond, pretty, a good partner to Father, a nurturer of the children and her husband, an effortless homemaker. Mother likes to look good and “dresses like a lady” in pretty dresses (even while doing housework) and has matching pocketbooks. Mother always remembered to sit with her ankles crossed and her hands clasped. According to some writers, she does not work outside of the home, because her place is in the home, making sure that everything is always in its rightful place (Havemann and West, 1952). In fact, careers would lead to the masculinization of women with enormously dangerous consequences to the home, the children dependent on it and to the ability of the woman, as well as her husband, to obtain sexual gratification (Farnham and Lundberg, 1942, quoted in Friedan, 1963: 42).

Instead, Mother is selfless and soothing, dedicating her life to her family (Kismaric and Heiferman, 1996). As late as the 1960s, women’s magazines encouraged their readers to assume such characteristics:

Psychiatrists call this characteristic “essential feminine altruism.” Simply stated, it means that the hallmark of real femininity is...regard for and devotion to the interests of others... For the true woman, then, children...
and husband come first, way before self, for that is how her altruism expresses itself (Robinson, 1960: 62).

At least through the 1950s, the popular U.S. conceptualization of femininity sometimes appeared to minimize or negate the possession of intelligence or education. The Jungian analyst Mrs. Florida Scott-Maxwell (1958: 156) counseled her readers in *Ladies' Home Journal*:

> When a woman begins to understand herself, she understands she has a masculine side as well as a feminine side and that masculine side is in constant danger of getting out of hand in our industrial, emancipated society. When a girl is in college and cultivates her mind, this may stimulate, even inflate, the masculine side, and she can become aridly intellectual, with a strong power drive, and then it is easy to become a doctor or a lawyer who is hardly feminine at all.

According to other writers, however, such as Duvall and Hill (1947: 210), some women risked their marriages if they failed to work:

> Some women are temperamentally so built that if they do not have a job of their own they either “blow up” or constantly meddle in the affairs of their husbands, and possibly those of other husbands as well. With them a real job outside of the office meets a vital psychological need.

Women working in the office were counseled to be feminine and not just female:

> Your over-all appearance should be such that the people with whom you are working will be aware of the fact that you are feminine, not just female...To be “female” at the office is a nuisance and therefore a waste of after-hours attractions (Ludden, 1956: 166).

Jane, like Dick and the world that they lived in, was entirely white. It was not until 1965 that non-white characters appeared to inhabit Dick and Jane’s idyllic world. For over 30 years, “femininity” had been defined for school-aged children as applying to white girls and women only.

Femininity has also been equated with a particular body build or image. For instance, columnist Dolly Martin wrote in 1964, in seeming surprise, that “It’s hard to
picture a girl of large build being quite feminine, yet many chubby girls have very pleasing tendencies" (Martin, 1964: 8). Bartky (1990) has asserted that the construction of a “feminine” body from a female one, that is, the aesthetic of femininity, demands fragility and a lack of muscular strength, resulting in the inability to defend oneself physically; smooth and hairless skin, thereby infantilizing the body of grown women; and body language that is reflective of both tension and constriction. Ultimately, Bartky argues, women’s adherence to this “performance” may engender attention, but affords little respect or social power and serves to demean everything that is female. In fact, women’s attempts to adhere to an externally-imposed construction of femininity actually results in the diminution of women specifically because of this focus on what could be considered trivialities, such as body image. Bartky (1990: 80) maintains, in fact, that the woman who checks her make-up half a dozen times a day to see if her foundation has caked or her mascara run, who worries that the wind or rain may spoil her hairdo, who looks frequently to see if her stockings have bagged at the ankle, or who, feeling fat, monitors everything she eats, has become...a self-policing object, a self committed to a relentless self-surveillance. This self-surveillance is a form of obedience to patriarchy.

The Objectification of Women

Some would argue that the systemic changes noted above (Chapter 1) in addressing partner violence have done little to effectuate change in underlying U.S. attitudes that serve to objectify and/or degrade women, who most frequently are the targets of partner violence. The objectification of women as a component part of U.S. culture is reflected, it might be argued, in the pervasiveness of obscenity and pornography that is directed against women; in our prohibition against prostitution; and
in the continuing sexual harassment of women in their places of employment, across professional and socioeconomic strata.

Debates regarding the proliferation of pornographic material against women often have as their basis the legal definition of obscenity: whether an average person, applying contemporary community standards, would find that the work, taken as a whole, appeals to prurient interests; whether the work depicts in a patently offensive manner sexual conduct defined by closely drafted relevant state law; or whether the work, taken as a whole, lacks serious literary, artistic, political, or scientific value (Miller v. California, 1972). In its most extreme forms, pornography depicts acts of violence, torture, degradation, and mutilation of victims, who are most frequently females (MacKinnon, 1987). Indeed, the goal of pornography is often to produce sexual arousal in response to the sexual abuse of women (MacKinnon, 1987). Research seems to suggest that exposure to pornography activates sexually callous perceptions of women and promotes sexually aggressive behavior by men (Weaver, 1992). A meta-analysis of experimental studies found that material that depicts nonviolent sexual activity increases aggressive behavior and depictions of violent sexual activity produces even greater aggression (Allen, D’Alessio, and Brezgel, 1995).

Material that is found to be obscene falls within a legal category of speech that is deemed to have little social value, together with fighting words (Chaplinsky v. New Hampshire, 1942), defamation (Beauharnais v. Illinois, 1952), incitement (Brandenburg v. Ohio, 1969), and child pornography (New York v. Ferber, 1982). Speech in this category is entitled to a lesser level of protection under the First Amendment right to freedom of speech, because it is not believed to contribute significantly to the system of
free expression. In contrast, speech of limited social value, such as commercial speech that includes advertising, and core speech, which includes political, religious, and philosophical speech (Carey v. Brown, 1980), receive increasing protection under the First Amendment.

Despite the relatively limited protection that obscenity receives constitutionally, women who have suffered injury that mirrors the pornography viewed by their assailants have been unable to recover damages for physical or emotional injuries. For instance, broadcasters were found not liable after a nine-year-old girl was raped with a bottle by a group of juveniles who saw a TV movie of a young girl raped with a plunger (Olivia N. v. National Broadcasting Company, 1982). Another court found specifically that, although pornography fosters aggression against women and threatens their right to equality and physical safety, this serves as evidence of the power of pornography and, therefore, the need to protect it constitutionally (American Booksellers v. Hudnut, 1985). Today, pornography remains a multi-billion dollar industry.

Prostitution has been defined as the performance of a sexual act for material gain (Anderson and Estes, 1998: 152). It has been asserted that prostitution itself serves to objectify women:

A person is sexually objectified when her sexual parts or sexual functions are separated out from the rest of her personality and reduced to the status of mere instruments or else regarded as if they were capable of representing her. On this definition then the prostitute would be a victim of sexual objectification, as would the Playboy bunny, the female breeder, and the bathing beauty (Bartky, 1990: 26).

It has been argued that the client of the prostitute does not want only an orgasm, for there are other means by which to achieve orgasm. He does not want sex, because
sex can be obtained from willing partners who do not have to be paid in this manner.

One man explained the underlying motivation:

> Of all the commentators, *Screw* publisher Al Goldstein was the most honest, reporting a story about the night he spent $100 on an escort. “It was splendid, rollicking sex. When it was over, I felt like willing my body to science. And then she left. She left. As the supreme final act in our opera of fucking, her leaving was like a cherry on the sundae, a sumptuous dessert after a seven-course meal, a plunge into cool water after running a marathon. That’s when I had my glistening realization. I realized I wasn’t paying this woman for sex. I was paying her for the luxury of her leaving after sex (Peterson, 1995: 52).

The illegality of prostitution, it has been asserted, serves to further objectify women in United States culture. The legalization of prostitution would mitigate the threat to the lives and the health of women engaged in commercial sex work. This lack of protection, it is asserted, reflects our devaluation of their persons, while the relative lack of enforcement of prostitution laws serves as an acknowledgement of men’s desire for the services, but not the persons.

The sexual harassment of women in the workplace is pervasive, by all accounts. Sexual harassment can assume one or both of two general forms. Quid pro quo sexual harassment refers to a demand for sex in exchange for a benefit, such as promotion, a raise, or an educational opportunity (*Williams v. Saxbe*, 1976). Sexual harassment due to a hostile work environment consists of an “intimidating, hostile, or offensive environment” (*Henson v. City of Dundee*, 1982). It has been estimated that 5.3% of women in the United States work force experience some form of sexual harassment in one year alone (International Labor Organization, 1998).

It is not only, however, the experience of sexual harassment that objectifies women, but also the refusal of the larger society and its relevant systems to accord
recognition to the experience as harassment which, it has been argued, should be considered a form of violence due to its use as a means of social control (Fitzgerald, 1993). Consider these examples. In the first case, the court found that a woman had not been subjected to sexual harassment where her supervisor repeatedly propositioned her and her co-workers slapped her on the buttocks and commented that she must groan during sex (Scott v. Sears, Roebuck and Co., 1986). In the second, the court found no harassment where male co-workers called women “whores,” “cunt,” “pussy,” and “tits;” referred to the specific female employee as a “fat ass;” and specifically stated: “That bitch needs a good lay” (Rabidue v. Osceola Refining Co., 1987). In both instances, the judges dismissed the conduct as having only a negligible effect.

The Devaluation of Women

U.S. culture, it has been argued, not only objectifies women, but also devalues them. Two examples are addressed here: the lack of parity in wages between men and women performing similar work and the lack of credence given to women in the context of health care.

Women have consistently been paid less for their work than men even when the work performed has been comparable. From 1930 to 1980, the earnings of women working full-time in comparable employment was only 60% of men’s earnings (Crittenden, 2003). A 1992 survey of graduates of the 1982 class of Stanford’s School of Business found that the median wage of female graduates was 58% of that earned by the male graduates, despite the fact that they had received the same training and were performing similar work.
Even greater penalties attach to women who choose to have families. A survey of 200 MBA-holders found that those who had taken an average of 8.8 months out of the job market were less likely to reach upper levels of middle management and earned 17% less than female MBA-holders who had no such gap in their employment history (Crittenden, 2003, citing Schneer and Reitman, 1993). These findings are not anomalous. A 1989 survey of Michigan Law School’s 1974 class found that the women had spent an average of 3.3 months out of the job market and one quarter of them had worked part-time for an average of 10.1 months during the course of 15 years. In contrast, the male graduates had no time out of the job market and worked almost entirely on a full-time basis. In 1989, average earnings among the women were 40% less than the men’s. Less than 20% of the women who had worked part-time for more than six months had made partner, while more than 80% of the mothers who had little or no part-time work became partners (Wood, Corcoran, and Courant, 1993).

Working-class women who need time due to family matters face even harsher penalties. Women may lose their seniority if they take time off and, as a consequence, lose their place in line for promotions and increase the likelihood that they will be come unemployed should layoffs occur (Williams, 2000). U.S. society, it has been argued, places women in a double-bind situation, simultaneously emphasizing family and “family values” while demanding that women “work like men,” with no time out of the work force and no accommodations made for family demands (Crittenden, 2003).

“Medicalization” has been defined as a “medical and paramedical monopoly over hygienic methodology and technology…a device to convince those who are sick and tired of society that it is they who are ill, impotent, and in need of technical repair” (Illich,
1997: vii). Yet another researcher explained, "Medicalization in short, is a way of reducing a broad array of human behaviors and social problems to malfunction or individual pathology" (Wilkerson, 1998: 125). Not infrequently, problems, particularly those experienced by female patients, have been medicalized and moral norms promoted in the guise of medical advice.

This process and the accompanying devaluation of women is particularly evident in the context of treatment for injuries suffered as the result of partner violence. For instance, Stark, Flitcraft, and Frazier (1983: 195) found that many women seeking treatment for partner-inflicted injuries were given "pseudopsychiatric labels in the medical records such as 'patient with vague medical complaints' or 'multiple symptomatology with psychosomatic overlay'." This pathologization serves to diminish the woman's experience and to reinforce the perception that her suffering constitutes an isolated personal problem for which she is ultimately responsible. Ultimately, the experience of violence is dismissed as "a female problem" reflective of inadequacies associated with being female.

NOT-MEN, NOT-WOMEN: THE STATUS OF ALTERNATIVE SEXUALITIES

It is beyond the scope of this work to examine the historical basis for our current recognition and classification of alternative sexualities. Instead, this portion focuses on the status accorded to those who self-identify or who are perceived to be homosexual, lesbian, transsexual, or transgender.

It could be argued that, like women, individuals of these alternative sexualities are marginalized and devalued by the larger culture within the United States. Certainly
within the legal context, gay men, lesbian women, and transsexual and transgender men and women have significantly fewer legal rights than do heterosexual men and women. For instance, in all jurisdictions within the United States, same-sex marriages are prohibited and, until relatively recently, a number of jurisdictions not only penalized but actually criminalized same-sex sexual behaviors that were permitted to heterosexual couples. The legal inability to marry has serious implications in numerous other domains, including property and inheritance rights, custody issues, health care decisionmaking, health insurance coverage, and taxation, to name a few (Cain, 2000).

Those individuals who choose to undergo sexual reassignment surgery to complete their physical metamorphosis from male to female or from female to male are more often than not relegated to a life of legal limine: the applicable laws often prohibits a redesignation of sex on the birth certificate, rendering it impossible in many circumstances for the individual to obtain a marriage license. For instance, a male-to-female transsexual may not be allowed to redesignate her sex, so that legally she remains a male although physically she is a female. She is precluded from marrying a male due to the legal prohibition against same-sex marriages.

The devaluation of those identified as of alternative sexualities is evident in other arenas as well. In general, such individuals are not recognized as a class by civil rights law; hate crimes against these individuals fail to exist officially because in almost all jurisdictions, there is no formal mechanism that provides for their recognition and enumeration. Federal and many state and local laws ostensibly shield women from employment-based discrimination and provide potential remedies to objectionable behavior; only a small minority of jurisdictions provide such protection on the basis of
perceived or actual sexual orientation. Indeed, in a number of jurisdictions, initiatives have been launched successfully that would prohibit any municipality or other governmental unit from enacting antidiscrimination legislation to protect those identified as homosexual, lesbian, bisexual, or transsexual (Cain, 2000).

Just as women's concerns have often been medicalized (see previous discussion relating to partner violence), so, too, has same-sex behavior been medicalized. Once seen as a religious or moral issue, same-sex behavior was gradually reframed to become an issue for law enforcement (Spencer, 1995). By the late 19th and early 20th centuries, same-sex behavior had become a focus for physicians. Although some physicians promoted the idea of homosexuality as a natural variant of sexual behavior, others adopted a theory of degeneracy (Greenberg, 1988). Degeneracy theory served both to expand the role of the physician to care for this disorder and to reinforce the middle class' perception of its own normalcy through the attribution of degeneracy to a seemingly identifiable class of persons.

Despite legal changes in some locales to prohibit antigay discrimination and the 1979 declassification by the American Psychiatric Association of homosexuality per se as a mental disorder, homosexuality is perceived by a large proportion of Americans as, at best, undesirable and, at worst, deserving of some form of punishment (Nardi and Bolton, 1991). A report of the New York States Governor's Task Force (1988: 97) concluded from a survey of 2823 junior and senior high school students in 20 districts that:

One of the most alarming findings in the youth survey is the openness with which the respondents expressed their aversion and hostility towards gays and lesbians … the students were quite emphatic about their dislike for these groups and frequently made violent, threatening statements. Gays and lesbians, it seems, are perceived as legitimate targets which can be openly attacked.
These attitudes cannot be attributed to a lack of education; antagonism towards homosexuals has been noted even among professionals, including physicians, nurses, and social workers (Berkman and Zinberg, 1997; Douglas, Kalman, and Kalman, 1985; Mathews, Booth, Turner, and Kessler, 1986; Oriel, Madlon-Kay, Govaker, and Mersy, 1996).

Empirical research has identified various factors that appear to be associated with negative attitudes towards homosexuals: (1) minimal personal contact with gays and lesbians, (2) non-identification as gay or lesbian and lack of same-sex experience, (3) a perception that peers hold anti-gay attitudes, (4) residence in a locality where antigay attitudes are prevalent, (6) adherence to a more conservative religious ideology, (7) adherence to traditional sex roles, (8) feeling guilt in association with sexuality, and (9) authoritarian attitudes (Herek, 1984). A study of male college students found that homosexuals who are perceived by heterosexuals to be similar to themselves were more likely to experience heightened levels of aggression (San Miguel and Milham, 1976). The level of aggression was not lessened even if the heterosexual had had some positive cooperative interaction with a homosexual. The researchers conclude that homosexuals “are subject to higher levels of aggression than are their normative counterpart” (San Miguel and Milham, 1976: 26). Other empirical studies have found that the majority of those who assault homosexuals and lesbians specifically because of their sexual orientation are young (in their 20s or younger) white males (Comstock, 1991).

One must question why aggression and violence against homosexuals is seemingly acceptable, at least among some segments of the population. Reference can be made to Foucault (1979: 178), who theorized that power may be maintained through a
normalizing process whereby “the whole indefinite domain of the non-conforming is punishable.” Foucault (1979: 183) argued that individuals are differentiated in terms of the following overall rule: that the rule be made to function as a minimum threshold, as an average to be respected or as an optimum towards which one must move. It ... hierarchizes in terms of values the abilities, the level, the “nature” of individuals. It introduces through this “value giving” measure, the constraint of conformity that must be achieved. Lastly, it traces the limit that will define difference in relation to all other differences, the external frontier of the abnormal.

Within the last two decades, homosexuality has come to be associated with AIDS, while AIDS has become a mechanism for the medicalization of morality: “promiscuity” is unsafe, but monogamy is safe; membership in identifiable social groups, such as homosexuals, is dangerous to one’s health, while membership in the “general population” is dangerous only when it is contaminated by the “un-general” (Gamson, 1989). In AIDS,

the categories of health and sickness... meet with those of sex, and the image of homosexuality is reinscribed with connotations of contagion and disease, a subject for medical attention and medical authority (Watney, 1987: 126).

SUMMARY

“Mainstream” America has defined masculinity as requiring sexual competency, self-reliance, risk-taking, restrictive emotionality, and the absence of all traits and behaviors that could be construed as feminine. Masculinity is measured by power, success, health, and status. It can be asserted through participation in sports and through positive actions, such as caring for one’s family members. In addition, masculinity can also be established by the willingness to engage in violence.
The fact that the conceptualization of masculinity often serves as the referent point for discussions of masculinity and femininity, as well as of gender role, is consistent with various culture-oriented theories of partner violence. For instance, patriarchy theory asserts that wife assault is a form of social control and domination of women by men. The use of masculinity as the referent point for what constitutes the norm implies that femininity, or not-masculinity, is somehow less. This conceptualization of masculinity and femininity may serve as a constant affirmation of men’s superiority and superior status and a symbolic reminder of their domination and ability to dominate.

Congruence also exists between psychosocial theory of partner violence and mainstream conceptualizations of masculinity and femininity. For instance, according to the theory of marital power, one of the factors in the establishment of a power base within a dyadic relationship is the cultural attribution of authority to a particular party in that relationship. A societal reliance on characteristics that comprise masculinity as the referent norm may serve to establish “maleness” as the culturally accepted source of authority within a dyadic relationship.

Portrayals of femininity have frequently been negative. For instance, until relatively recently, psychoanalytic thought conceived of femininity as a triad of passivity, masochism, and narcissism. Although not stated as such, these characteristics did, indeed, signify the opposite of masculinity’s attributes of activism and independence. Later, popularly marketed conceptualizations of femininity also portrayed the quality as the opposite of the masculine. In fact, possession of characteristics usually associated with men and masculinity would render a female less than feminine and potentially even
unattractive to the opposite sex. Feminine women, in fact, were to be content to serve supporting roles to men.

Various forms of aggression, such as actual violence, sexual harassment, and pornography, against women and those of non-majority sexualities may be tolerated as expressions of masculinity. These forms of expression serve to objectify, devalue, and marginalize women and those of non-majority sexualities in U.S. society. The fact that such forms of aggression are not only permitted but may be condoned lends support to culture-oriented theories, as such treatment of women reinforces their domination by men.

The devaluation of women and others in U.S. society in this manner similarly provides support for various psychosocial theories of partner violence. Not only does society establish men or maleness as the base of authority in a dyadic relationship, according to the theory of marital power, but through this treatment of women reaffirms that the basis of power does not rest with the woman. In the context of the exchange theory, it could be argued that such treatment of women conveys the message that a further devaluation of women through violence will be tolerated, that is, men will batter women because they can. Traumatic bonding theory posits that over time, the power imbalance within a relationship becomes magnified so that the dominant party develops an inflated sense of his or her own power while, concomitantly, the subjugated party feels increasingly negative about him- or herself. It is possible that the societally-conveyed messages to women of their reduced value in relation to men may reinforce the development of negative feelings about themselves and render it more difficult for them to attempt to leave an abusive relationship.
This chapter has explored the formulation of concepts of masculinity and femininity and the gender roles assigned to men and women in “mainstream” America. The discussion has built on an examination of partner violence in the United States since the colonial era. However, it cannot be assumed that individuals of Puerto Rican ethnicity necessarily share or do not share this same historical framework or conceptualizations of masculinity, femininity, and male and female gender roles. Chapter Six explores these issues.
DEFINING ETHNICITY

As this research focuses on perceptions of partner violence among men and women of two ethnic groups, it is critical that readers share an understanding of what constitutes an ethnic group. Winkelman (2001:283) has defined ethnic groups as socially recognized groups with salient differences with respect to other groups in society. This distinctiveness may be based on many factors – for example, geographical isolation, in-group marriage, a distinctive cultural heritage or national background, a specific language, common values and beliefs including religion, specific social roles and behavioral patterns, or other sources of a common identity derived from occupation, gender, and sexual identity. Ethnic groups are fundamental reference groups, the social category from which one acquires personal characteristics, social and psychological attachments, definitions of self, and a common sense of membership or group belonging. This sense of belonging to the same group (peoplehood) may be fictive rather than actual. Actual characteristics may be less important to ethnicity than people’s perceptions and the meanings associated with the groups with which they identify. The sense of ethnic identity is not just a function of one’s cultural behaviors and sense of self-identity; it is also a function of the constraints and contributions derived from others in society ... Ethnic categorization may be imposed by external groups upon diverse groups of people who share no sense of inclusive commonality or actual common cultural heritage.

Logically, then, ethnic identity derives from the interaction of the self with both the characteristics of the referent ethnic group and with those outside of the referent group, or the “not self,” so to speak. It is likely, then, that an individual’s ethnicity and ethnic identity may change over the course of his or her lifetime, as his or her perceptions of self are modified relative to both the referent group and those outside of his or her group. As Fischer (1986: 201) explained, “Ethnicity is a process of inter-reference
between two or more cultural traditions.” For instance, an individual migrating to the United States from a town in Puerto Rico might first identify as a member of that community-group. When he or she arrives in the mainland United States and is told by others that his or her identity is that of Puerto Rican, he or she may develop a sense of membership in the ethnic group known as Puerto Ricans, distinct from whites or blacks. Still later, as the individual develops a sense of the political dynamic where he or she lives, he or she may develop an identity as an Hispanic.

Externally manifested aspects of ethnicity are reflected in a group’s normative patterns of social interaction, communication, and so on (Winkelman, 2001; De Vos and Romanucci-Ross, 1982). These patterns include, but are not limited to, family roles, sex roles, the level of formality in different types of relationships, eye contact, negotiation approaches, facial expressions, time orientation, conflict management, and the manifestation of respect.

Individuals who self-identify as Puerto Rican can be of any skin tone, for example, a shade of white or a very dark shade of black. This is to be distinguished, for the purpose of this research, from individuals who self-identify as non-Hispanic white, or Anglo, meaning individuals with white skin who do not identify as having a Hispanic and, in particular, a Puerto Rican heritage.

Accordingly, one is Puerto Rican by any number of means. One can be Puerto Rican by virtue of birth in Puerto Rico. In this circumstance, one is simultaneously American because of Puerto Rico’s status vis-à-vis the United States, discussed in detail on subsequent pages of this dissertation. One is Puerto Rican if one or both of one’s parents is Puerto Rican, even if one has never been to the island and even if one is highly...
accustomed to living on the mainland. Nevertheless, the meaning of being Puerto Rican may vary across groups and individuals.

**HISTORICAL CONTEXT**

**The Spanish Conquest**

Puerto Rico has been called “the oldest colony of the modern world” (Lao, 1997). Prior to its colonization by the Spaniards in 1508, Boriquen, the indigenous name for Puerto Rico, was inhabited by the Taino peoples. By various accounts, this was a classist society; upon their arrival, the Spaniards noted pre-existing demarcations between various classes of individuals. The Spaniards incorporated these distinctions into their categorization of the Taino statuses: the kings and governors (*caciques*), the nobles or principals (*nitainos*), and the servants or subjects (*naborias*) (Moscoso, 1980). The chiefly class relied upon the servant class for labor and the products of their labor as tributes. The size of the Taino population remains in dispute, but estimates range from 30,000 to 600,000.

It is believed that prior to the arrival of the Spaniards in Boriquen, Agueybana, the chief of Guaynia, had learned of the massacre of the Tainos in what was known as Hispaniola. In order to avoid a similar fate, he opted to become a blood brother of Ponce de Leon. Through his cooperation, the Spanish colonizers began to establish towns and to search for gold. The accumulation of metal wealth was a prime motive during this initial phase of Spanish colonization of Boriquen.

Through the intercession of the *caciques* and *nitainos*, designated Taino families residing in these constituted towns were “entrusted” to selected Spanish colonists, known
as encomenderos. These Taino naborias worked for the encomenderos in the mines, in agriculture, in cattle ranching, and as domestic servants.

It was not until 1511 that the Tainos began to mount organized revolts against the Spanish conquerors. By that time, extremely hard labor, malnutrition, and epidemics of smallpox and measles had decimated the Taino communities. By 1531, there remained only 2,000 Taino registered in the encomiendas; this decline in the native population ultimately resulted in a decline in the productivity of the mines. The Spanish colonizers turned to black slavery to replace the lost labor of the encomienda system.

With the demise of the mines, the Spanish settlers turned to agriculture and stock raising. Although the majority of crops were grown for internal consumption, some were raised for export in order to pay for the commodities deemed essential, such as olive oil and wine, that were not otherwise available on the island (Lopez, 1980b). By the 16th century, sugar became an export of primary importance. Consequently, during the 1520s, the importation of black slaves became of critical economic importance. By 1530, there were almost 1500 black slaves in a total population of just over 3000. By 1765, however, their proportion of the population declined to just over 11% due to brutalization, deaths during resistance attempts, and a relatively lower birth rate in comparison to the Spanish settlers. Despite the growing importance of the sugar trade, however, Puerto Rico remained of little economic importance to Spain until the end of the 18th century.

During the 16th and 17th centuries, two parallel administrations developed, one civil and one ecclesiastical. The civil administration of the towns fell to Spanish-born aristocrats who were granted wide-ranging powers. Unlike the British in North America, the Spaniards refused to tolerate the participation of the local population in their own
governance. In addition, Catholicism was the only religion that was tolerated. Although the Church provided most of the teachers throughout the 17th century, the Church was poor and remained so throughout the era of Spanish rule on the island.

At the beginning of the 17th century, the majority of Puerto Rico's population was poor, illiterate, isolated from urban areas and, in the words of one researcher, “nominal Catholics” (Lopez, 1980b). However, Spanish law and Catholicism had by this time impacted both Taino religion, which was based on a constellation of spirits that controlled the forces of nature (Moscoso, 1980), and family structure, which had, within the respective classes, recognized the value of both men and women. Lopez (1980b: 33034) described the significant changes following the Spanish conquest:

[T]he beliefs of the black slaves imported into the island had their impact on the religious beliefs of the islanders. Rural Christianity was characterized by superstition and the belief in good and evil natural forces that only the curanderos could understand and control. The societies of the towns and of the rural areas were male-dominated societies in which the woman’s proper role was that of a good daughter, a good wife and a good mother. As a rule, the degree of control over her own life enjoyed by a woman depended on her social status: the more affluent and “respectable” she was, the greater the limitations on her social and economic activities. Among the poor, the family structure was more amorphous and flexible than among the elite. Prestige and family honor were not as important concerns as they were among the well-to-do. Within the more informal atmosphere of lower class families women enjoyed greater freedom from the restraints placed upon their upper class counterparts and often assumed a relatively authoritative position within the family that carried over into external society.

Although Puerto Rico had been of relatively little importance to Spain economically during the 16th and 17th centuries, by the 18th century, control of the island figured prominently in its military strategy and in its commercial system, providing a base from which Spain could launch its operations to disrupt the now-
flourishing English commerce. Sugar exports assumed increasing importance, as did the production of coffee, tobacco, and cotton. Black slavery continued to be of major importance in these activities, due to the instability of the non-slave labor force.

Despite this growth in Puerto Rico's strategic and economic importance, however, by the end of the 18th century, after 250 years of Spanish occupation, the inhabitants of Puerto Rico were “the poorest in America,” according to Alejandro O'Reilly, a field marshal in the army of the king of Spain. The island was still sparsely populated, with a total population of 44,883, that comprised 5037 black slaves, several hundred Spaniards, several hundred locally born whites known as creoles, and the remainder free blacks and mulattoes. The population remained primarily rural and concentrated in the coastal plains. The island still had no roads; there was a critical shortage of capital in the industries; and political power rested in the hands of a few Spanish-appointed administrators and bureaucrats (Lopez, 1980a).

The 19th century, however, saw significant change. Puerto Rico experienced a huge increase in population, due primarily to a high birth rate rather than immigration. The population grew from 155,000 in 1800 to 583,000 in 1860, and reached 950,000 by the time of the U.S. occupation in 1898. Governmental elimination of restrictions in trade, together with the immigration of families with sufficient capital, helped to bring about an expansion of commercial agriculture, with sugar remaining the most important export. By 1880, in fact, the increasing expansion of commercial agriculture resulted in a decrease in subsistence farming, so much so that by the end of the 19th century, Puerto Rico imported approximately 40% of the food needed for consumption (Lopez, 1980a).
Puerto Rico's slave population gradually decreased in proportion to the total population, accounting for 14% in 1860, but only 5% by 1872 (Lopez 1980a. Lopez' assertions have been disputed, however, by other researchers who argue that Puerto Rico's slave population never exceeded 11% of its total population. See Quintero Rivera, 1980). The eventual decline has been explained by reference to a number of factors, including a relatively low rate of reproduction; the inability of many to import slaves due to a lack of adequate capital; the entry by Spain in 1817 into a treaty agreement with England to end its Puerto Rican slave trade by 1820; and the initiation by Spain in 1845 of an effort to end the illegal importation of slaves to the island.

This decline in slavery meant that the commercial agriculture sector faced an inadequate labor supply. The majority of free blacks, mulattoes, and “poor whites” lived in rural areas as subsistence farmers on lands belonging to others and were not often willing to work in the commercial establishments. In 1824, laws were promulgated to permit the eviction of individuals who could not prove legal title to the land that they cultivated. These laws were formulated specifically with the intention of bringing new lands into commercial cultivation and to create a “landless peasantry” that would be forced to secure employment or sharecropping agreements in order to survive. These “free” workers worked alongside black slaves on sugar, coffee, and tobacco haciendas (Lopez, 1980a).

Many of these “free” workers and the slaves attempted to resist their repression and forced labor. Government concern with repeated attempts at rebellion led to the establishment of the Guardia Rural, a rural police force that, together with the Spanish
Guardia Civil, attempted to enforce labor laws and protect the interests of the Spanish and Puerto Rican landowners.

Although both slavery and the laws regulating Puerto Rico’s “free” workers were abolished in 1873, their impact was clear. By the end of the 19th century, 85% of Puerto Rico’s populace lived in rural areas; this population was generally poor, illiterate, and subjected to the brutality of the Guardia Rural and the Guardia Civil. An internal migratory wave emerged from the coastal sugar-producing regions to the interior and western coffee-producing areas (Sanchez-Korrol, 1983). Many Puerto Ricans were subsistence farmers who periodically worked on the sugar, coffee, and tobacco haciendas to supplement their incomes. These haciendas were owned by a small, elite proportion of Puerto Rican and Spanish landowners who controlled almost all of the land utilized for the production of sugar, coffee, and tobacco. Lopez (1980a: 72) described the relationship of the workers and their employers:

Between the workers and their employers there often existed ties of compadrazgo (godparenthood) that allowed the landowners to camouflage the exploitative relationships under the guise of protecting “their” workers; in exchange for this protection, workers were expected to obey and respect their employers.

The small farmers and the landless agricultural workers who migrated from crop to crop in search of employment eventually became the symbol of the Popular Democratic Party, which worked to improve their working conditions. Referred to as jibaros by townspeople, they were often regarded as backward and unsophisticated (Leavitt, 1974).

Women from moneyed families often participated in Puerto Rico’s economic life during this period. They owned or co-owned plantations, bought and sold slaves, rented rooms and houses to others, and operated small businesses (Matos Rodriguez, 1999).
Much of the capital that was needed for these ventures was derived from inheritances or marriage.

Increasingly, Puerto Rican professionals and intelligentsia began to call for reforms and bitterness towards the Spanish presence in Puerto Rico grew. An examination of the various movements for reform and independence from Spain is beyond the scope of this dissertation; many sources are available for consultation (Maldonado-Denis, 1972; Wells, 1969). Puerto Rican reformists efforts were of critical importance in the abolition of slavery. However, the Puerto Rican Liberal Reformist party experienced divisiveness within its membership, with some individuals favoring unity with Spain and other members pressing for complete autonomy. The creation of the Autonomist Party brought charges of treason from Spain, which attempted to squelch all discussion of autonomy through the imposition of a “reign of terror,” characterized by the arrest, detention, and torture of hundreds of political activists. By the early 1890s, a number of Autonomists had fled Puerto Rico and sought refuge in other Spanish-speaking islands and in New York City.

The U.S. Invasion and Occupation

The U.S. invaded Puerto Rico on July 25, 1898 (Christopulos, 1980). The U.S. military governor General Nelson Miles declared:

To the inhabitants of Puerto Rico: In the prosecution of war against the Kingdom of Spain by the people of the United States, in the cause of liberty, justice and humanity, its military forces have come to occupy the island of Puerto Rico...[W]e come bearing the banner of freedom, inspired by a noble purpose...[W]e have] come to bring protection, not only to yourselves but to your property, to promote your prosperity, and to bestow upon you the immunities and blessings of the liberal institutions of our government... (Quoted in Carr, 1984: 31)
Nothing could have been further from the reality.

It was not until the passage by the U.S. Congress of the Foraker Act in 1900, however, that the political and economic relationship between the United States and Puerto Rico was clearly established. The Foraker Act placed almost all power in the hands of appointed, rather than elected, officials. The elected Puerto Rican “resident commissioner” would not be permitted to vote in the U.S. House of Representatives. Puerto Rico could no longer establish its own budget or tariffs or negotiate commercial treaties with foreign powers. U.S. Congress could annul any piece of legislation of the Puerto Rican legislature (Lopez, 1980a). New Puerto Rican political parties were organized in response to these pronouncements. Some of these were strongly pro-American and identified with the U.S.; others were committed to status as a state within the U.S., while still others endorsed independence and autonomy. These diverse political perspectives continue to exist to the present day (Christopulos, 1980).

Through the implementation of a series of legislative enactments and tariffs, Puerto Rico became increasingly dependent on the U.S. In order to further even more the investment of U.S. capital and the establishment of North American corporations on the island, educational, monetary, legal, and economic modifications were imposed. These included the development of new school curricula to Americanize the population and inculcate U.S. values; the devaluation of the local currency; and the construction of roads and bridges, among others (Sanchez-Korrol, 1983). Martin Brumbaugh, the first U.S. Commissioner of Education, declared

The spirit of American institutions and the ideals of the American people, strange as they do seem to some in Puerto Rico, must be the
only spirit and the only ideals incorporated in the school system of Porto [sic] Rico (Quoted in Carr, 1984: 282).

Luis Munoz Rivera, a former president of the Autonomist Party, predicted:

In the future there will be abundance, physical well-being, a richness of fruits and metals; but there will be no country. And if there is, it will belong to Americans and their sons and grandsons. In half a century it will be a stain to wear a name of Spanish culture (Quoted in Lopez, 1971: 23).

During the course of this “educational reform,” U.S. administrators reported their observations of the population to the U.S. government. These pronouncements would become the basis for the formulation of policy. For instance, Samuel McCune Lindsay, a U.S.-appointed Commissioner of Education from February 8, 1902 to October 1, 1904, commented on the apparent lack of morality that characterized Puerto Rico:

I do not believe that there was more prostitution or illegitimacy as we use these terms, than would be found among the social population of our large cities; but the conditions of family living were such, and are such to-day, that in addition to the somewhat laxer views prevalent in tropical countries, there is probably a greater amount of incest and sexual excesses that have a marked effect upon the physical vitality of the children. An unusually large percentage of the children presented for enrollment in the public schools have shown signs of syphilitic affliction in some form (Lindsay, 1907: 296).

Migration to the U.S. Mainland

As indicated above, several migration patterns began to change in Puerto Rico due to the various political and economic changes. First, internal migration from the coastal regions to the interior and the western areas of Puerto Rico increased due to the movement of free workers in search of employment. Second, emigration to the United States had begun prior to the 1898 invasion by the U.S., in response to the Spanish
persecution and oppression of political opponents. Emigration from Puerto Rico accelerated further following the U.S. invasion.

Three periods of Puerto Rican migration to the U.S. have been delineated (Stevens-Arroyo and Diaz-Stevens, 1982). The first, which stretches roughly from 1900 to 1945, has been called the period of the pioneers (Rodriguez, 1994). The majority of these emigrants established themselves in various sections of New York City, including the Atlantic Avenue section of Brooklyn, the Lower East Side, Chelsea, the Upper West Side, the Lincoln Center area, and the South Bronx. Many of these individuals arrived in response to solicitations by corporations for industrial and agricultural labor. (It is beyond the scope of this dissertation to examine the details of migration to and settlement within various locales on the mainland. A significant number of sources exist that can be consulted for these histories. See, for example, Baker, 2002; Cruz, 1998; Torres and Velazquez, 1998).

The second phase, known as “the great migration,” spanned the period from 1946 to 1964. During this time, the already-settled areas of New York City expanded in size and additional settlements were established in New Jersey, Chicago, and other areas of the country. The majority of Puerto Ricans, however, resided in New York.

The period of “revolving door migration,” as the period since 1965 has come to be known, involves a fluctuating pattern of net migration and dispersion of Puerto Ricans to other areas of the U.S. mainland. This period is characterized by declines in income, increases in the rate of unemployment, and an increase in the proportion of households headed by women (Sanchez-Korrol, 1994). During this period, changes in the composition of the U.S. mainland Puerto Rican population are particularly evident. In
1950, approximately one-quarter of the Puerto Ricans residing on the mainland had been born there. However, by 1970, the size of the U.S-born Puerto Rican population had grown to 646,000, compared to 783,000 island-born migrants on the mainland (United States Commission on Civil Rights, 1976). The median age of the island-born population was 30, similar to the median age for all U.S. residents. The median age for mainland-born Puerto Ricans, however, was 9.3 years of age.

Several theories have been propounded to explain this exodus. One theory, advanced by Chenault (1970) and Handlin (1959), maintains that emigration constituted a solution to excess population that had been brought about by U.S.-formulated improvements in health and medicine. Because the needs of this increased population could not be met, emigration provided an adequate, albeit temporary, solution. Other researchers have argued that the existence of employment opportunities outside of Puerto Rico, many of which were created by mainland U.S. companies seeking temporary workers (Maldonado, 1979; Lapp, 1986; Piore, 1979), “pulled” individuals from Puerto Rico (Richards, 1983; Watkins, 1966; Mills, Senior, and Goldsen, 1950; Perloff, 1950).

Still others have maintained that the high rate of emigration was attributable to the inadequacy of the profitable and otherwise successful sugar cane industry in generating sufficient employment and the consequent emigration of Puerto Rican workers in order to survive (Campos and Bonilla, 1976). The Depression, in particular, heralded a contraction of Puerto Rico's agricultural sector, a decline in Puerto Rican incomes, and an increasing dependence on the U.S. Structural unemployment increased and many individuals were reduced to part-time work. These structural changes had a significant impact on families:
Many families were forced to depend precariously on poorly paid female work such as home-based needlecrafts. This was a disastrous turn of events because woman’s labor had always been considered supplementary and therefore viewed as less valuable than men’s...In addition, women generally occupied the lowest paying jobs in all of the industries where they were employed (Sanchez Korrol, 1994: 27).

These changes are reflected in the autobiographical account of Santiago, a Puerto Rican man who later relocated to New York City. Speaking of the economic situation in Puerto Rico during the 1930s, Santiago reminisced:

The almost desperate need to have sufficient money to purchase the basic commodities of life, food, clothing, and shelter was their [Puerto Ricans’] only concern. In essence, very few people had a surplus amount of money in those days. I cannot ever remember seeing or handling paper currency as a young boy living on a farm in Puerto Rico...I do recall handling coins, lots of coins (Santiago, 2002: 56).

The enactment in the U.S. of two pieces of legislation may have also had a significant impact on Puerto Rican emigration to the U.S. mainland. The Jones Act of 1917 conferred United States citizenship on Puerto Ricans and required obligatory military service in the U.S. armed forces. This new law essentially transformed the status of Puerto Rican émigrés to the mainland from that of immigrants to that of migrants. Between 1906 and 1916, the largest group of Puerto Ricans to leave the island for the U.S. was 7,394. However, in 1917, following the passage of the Jones Act, 10,812 Puerto Ricans left, almost all going to North America (History Task Force, 1979). The Johnson Acts of 1921 and 1924 severely curtailed European immigration to the United States; this indirectly resulted in the increased availability of job opportunities or unskilled workers from Puerto Rico.

It is unlikely that any one factor was responsible for the push from Puerto Rico or the pull from the United States. Individual motivations most likely varied depending
upon the economic and political conditions on the island and those that prevailed on the mainland at any given time, in addition to more personal circumstances. Indeed, Lewis (1968) concluded from his study of first generation migrants from Puerto Rico to New York City that although many of the informants indicated that they had come to New York in search of better economic opportunities, “in a significant number of cases the precipitating factor for leaving Puerto Rico was not economic but social or psychological in nature, such as marital or family problems, indebtedness, trouble with police, and similar difficulties” (Lewis, 1968: 117). Moreover, several researchers have confirmed that neither welfare payments nor unemployment compensation were decisive factors for most Puerto Ricans who have migrated to the mainland (Lewis, 1968; Maldonado, 1975).

**PUERTO RICANS: ON THE ISLAND AND THE MAINLAND**

**Employment, Income, and Health**

Various scholars have reflected on what appears to be the “persisting disadvantage” of Puerto Ricans (Rodriguez, 1994). Although many minority groups in the United States advanced economically during the 1960s, Puerto Ricans, on the whole, failed to do so (Santana Cooney and Colon, 1996). In 1960, Puerto Ricans had a lower family median income than did African-Americans, members of other Hispanic groups, and Native Americans. Compared to other Hispanic groups, Puerto Ricans were the only Hispanics who did not narrow the income gap relative to non-Hispanic whites during the 1970s (Bean and Tienda, 1988). The gap widened even further by 1980. Of Puerto Rican families with children, almost half were headed by a woman and 75% of these female-headed households had incomes below poverty level (Fitzpatrick, 1987).
1987, the median family income for Puerto Ricans was less than half of that for non-Hispanic whites (Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, 1988). Employment rates among Puerto Ricans in 1980 were lower than those of any other group and even those who were employed worked fewer hours on average (Borjas, 1985). In particular, the employment rate for Puerto Rican males declined between 1960 and 1980, while the rate among women increased during this same period.

In 1989, 23.7% of all Hispanics living on the United States mainland were living below the poverty level. Compared to other Hispanic subgroups, the proportion of those living below the poverty level was highest among Puerto Ricans (30.8%), followed by Mexicans (24.9%). In that same year, Puerto Ricans reported the lowest median household income of all Hispanic families living on the mainland: $15,447, compared to $20,359 for all Hispanics combined and $27,781 for all non-Hispanics. Among women 16 years of age or older living on the mainland, Puerto Ricans reported the lowest proportion employed (42%) compared to 57% for all Hispanic groups and 52% for non-Hispanics (Rodriguez, 1996).

Even in more recent years, Puerto Ricans remain relatively poor, both on the island and on the mainland. As of the 1990 census, just over 9% of the U.S. mainland Puerto Rican population was unemployed, compared with 20.4% of the population in Puerto Rico. Slightly more than one-third of mainland Puerto Rican individuals lived under the poverty level that year, while 58.9% of persons on the island were under the poverty level. The per capita income for island Puerto Ricans (IPR) was $4,177 in 1990, compared to $11,241 for mainland Puerto Ricans (MPR), still low by any standard. Almost one-quarter (23.2%) of households in Puerto Rico were headed by a female; of
these, 69.9% were living in poverty. The situation was hardly better on the mainland, where almost one-third of households were headed by a female and more than half (58.3%) of these were living in poverty.

Even compared with other Hispanics/Latinos, Puerto Ricans are not faring well on the mainland. As of 1998, 30.9% of MPR were living in poverty, the highest proportion of any Hispanic/Latino subgroup. Among families, slightly more than one-quarter (26.7%) were living in poverty, compared with, for instance, 11% of Cuban families (United States Bureau of the Census, 1999). As of the 2000 census, 33.2% of Puerto Ricans age 25 years and older had not graduated from high school.

As an example of this relatively poor socioeconomic status, consider the situation of many Puerto Ricans in Cuyahoga County, Ohio, the site of this study. Cuyahoga County is considered home to a population of 1,393,978, according to the 2000 census. Of these individuals, 938,863, or 67.4% are considered white; 65.9%, though, are considered white and not of Hispanic origin. A total of 47,078 persons, or 3.4% of the county’s population, are classified as Hispanic or Latino, regardless of the color of their skin; 30,147 of these 47,078 individuals are Puerto Rican, accounting for 2.2% of Cuyahoga County’s population and 75.2% of its Hispanic/Latino population. Just over 3% of the county’s population uses Spanish as the primary language at home, while 1.2% of the county’s population speaks primarily Spanish at home and also speaks English “less than very well” (United States Bureau of the Census, 2003).

In 1999, the median household income for white-headed households in Cuyahoga County was $44,675; the median for Hispanic-headed households was $15,209 less. In Cleveland, where 41.5% of the population of 478,403 is white and 7.3% is Hispanic,
16.6% of whites lived under the poverty level, compared to almost one-third (32.6%) of Hispanics (Ohio State University, 2003). The levels of poverty and unemployment among Puerto Ricans in Cuyahoga County are mirrored in other urban locations including, for example, Perth Amboy, New Jersey; Chicago, Illinois; Milwaukee, Wisconsin; and New Haven, Bridgeport, and Hartford, Connecticut (Baker, 2002).

This persistent disadvantage is evident in other arenas as well. In 1991, Puerto Rico ranked second compared to the states in the rate of AIDS cases among women, 25.1 per 100,000. Puerto Rico ranked second in overall AIDS cases (50.9 per 100,000) and third in the rate of pediatric cases (30.4 per 100,000). It has been said that if Puerto Rico were an independent nation, it would rank fourth in the world in AIDS cases per capita (Zorilla, Diaz, Romaguera, and Martin, 1994). Sixty percent of all AIDS cases among adolescent and adult males in Puerto Rico have been linked to injection drug use; an additional 10% is attributable to both sexual behavior and injection drug use (Centers for Disease Control, 1992; Central Office for AIDS Affairs, 1992). The situation is mirrored on the mainland, where Puerto Ricans have the highest rate of HIV infection among all Latino subgroups and, in contrast to HIV infection among other Latino subgroups, the vast majority are attributable directly or indirectly to injection drug use rather than to unprotected sexual relations with either opposite-sex or same-sex partners (Centers for Disease Control, 2002).

In 1990, teenage births accounted for 22% of all births to Puerto Rican mothers on the mainland; this proportion of births to teenagers is higher than among any other Latino subgroup and much higher than the 10% of births that are born to non-Hispanic white teenagers (National Center for Health Statistics, 1993). Various theories have been
offered in an attempt to explain this relatively high rate of teenage pregnancy, including a relatively greater reluctance to seek abortion as compared with other groups (Joyce, 1988), less frequent use of contraception among those who do seek abortions (Henshaw and Silverman, 1988), and the lack of adequate outreach and education to sexually active Puerto Rican teens regarding family planning (Ventura, 1994).

A study of births to Hispanic women in New York City for the years 1985 through 1988 found that, whether born on the mainland or the island, Puerto Ricans had the highest proportion of unmarried mothers, 60%, in comparison to all other Hispanic subgroups (Lederman and Sierra, 1994). This same study concluded that among non-U.S.-mainland-born individuals across Hispanic subgroups, island-born Puerto Rican mothers had the largest proportion of unmarried mothers and the second worst rates (following Mexico-born mothers) of teen births, higher education, unemployment, and inadequate prenatal care. Among mainland-born mothers, Puerto Ricans had the highest rates of teen births, births to unmarried mothers, low levels of post-high school education, inadequate prenatal care, and unemployment. The underlying reasons for these indicators are unclear, particularly because Puerto Ricans, regardless of the location of their birth on the island or the mainland, are United States citizens and are eligible for many health-related services. In addition, members of the other Hispanic subgroups face similar language barriers and additional barriers to employment due to their status as immigrants. Among Hispanic groups, Puerto Ricans have been found to have the highest percentage of reported drug use among both mainland-born and island-born pregnant women (De La Rosa, Khalsa, and Rouse, 1990; Lederman and Sierra, 1994); it is always possible that a selection bias in testing and interviewing may play a part in these reported findings.
Numerous factors have been implicated in the maintenance of this “persistent disadvantage,” including ongoing discrimination; language barriers; the lack of a responsive educational system to the needs of Puerto Ricans, resulting in a high dropout rate; and biased educational testing (United States Commission on Civil Rights, 1976). Various writers have also asserted that Puerto Rico’s history of colonization and slavery has played a role in the development and maintenance of this disadvantage (Lopez, 1980a; Morley, 1980; Muniz, 1998).

Various Puerto Rican writers speaking of their own experiences have attributed the disproportionate levels of poverty, at least in part, to unemployment and lack of education resulting from discrimination against those who are different. Cofer, a Puerto Rico-born woman who later migrated to New York City, recounted in her autobiography many of the difficulties that her father had obtaining an apartment following the family’s move to New York from the Island, all because he was Puerto Rican:

It seems that father had learned some painful lessons about prejudice while searching for an apartment in Paterson [New Jersey]. Not until years later did I hear how much resistance he had encountered with landlords who were panicking at the influx of Latinos into a neighborhood that had been Jewish for a couple of generations. But it was the American phenomenon of ethnic turnover that was changing the urban core of Paterson, and the human flood could not be held back with an accusing finger.

“You Cuban?” the man had asked my father, pointing a finger at his name tag on the Navy uniform—even though my father had the fair skin and light brown hair of his northern Spanish family background and our name is as common in Puerto Rico as Johnson is in the U.S.

“No., my father had answered looking past the finger into his adversary’s angry eyes “I’m Puerto Rican.”

“Same shit.” And the door closed. My father could have passed for European, but we couldn’t (Cofer, (1991: 89).

Identification with one’s own group could bring security, but it could also bring hardship and foster a desire to hide one’s group affiliation. Rivera (1982) described in his
autobiography how he had learned quickly that he was Puerto Rican and the significance of that membership: “The law was that you always sided with Your Own Kind; if you didn’t you lost your membership in that unofficial club and were subject to assassination in one form or another. Even our adults belonged to that club; even cops” (Rivera, 1982: 118). Nevertheless, his father faced discrimination and hostility in response to his many efforts to secure employment when he arrived in New York City from the Island. As a strategy to deal with this discrimination and hostility, Rivera learned to “cover” who he was:

Nobody had ever taken me for someone whose veins might contain Negro or Arab or Caribbean Indian blood. I was too light-skinned for that. On various occasions I had been mistaken for a Jew, an Italian, a Greek, even a Hungarian; and each time I had come away feeling secretly proud of myself for having disguised my Spik accent, and with it my lineage. I could almost feel myself melting smoothly and evenly into the great Pot” (Rivera, 1982: 148).

The formation of gangs represented yet another strategy to address racism and prejudice. The Almighty Latin King and Queen Nation (ALKQN) was formed in Chicago in the 1940s in an attempt to fight injustice and better Latino communities. The organization consists of two affiliated groups, the Latin Kings for men and its sister organization, the Latin Queens, for women. All members then and now are required to have a Latin bloodline; most are Puerto Rican. Members tend to use crowns on their tattoos; the crowns often bear the letters “LK” (Latin Kings) and a symbol in opposition to other gangs, such as “pitch forks down.” Gang colors are black and gold.

Chapters of the ALKQN currently exist in Arizona, California, Connecticut, Florida, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, New York, Ohio (including Cleveland), Puerto Rico, Louisiana, and Texas. Compared to other gangs, the ALKWN is more
structured and organized, with a written constitution and strict rules that are rigidly enforced. Violations of these rules may result in membership suspension or termination, physical assault by other gang members, and/or death. (For a description of these consequences, see Sanchez, 2000.) Despite the admirable goals that provided the foundation for the formation of the ALKQN, the gang has become known as one of the United States’ most violent street gangs and is believed to be heavily involved in armed robberies, narcotics trafficking, and murder (United States v. Felipe, 1998).

Psychological distress may be yet another consequence of the stress associated with migration to the United States. Compared to other Latino groups, Puerto Ricans have been found to be the poorest subgroup and suffer the highest rate of psychological distress and disorder (Vera, Alegria, Freeman et al., 1991). Puerto Ricans have consistently reported higher rates of suicidal ideation and attempts than either Mexican Americans or Cuban Americans (Ungemack and Guarnaccia, 1998). A review of studies of Puerto Rican mental health concluded that Puerto Ricans in New York report more psychological stress than Puerto Ricans on the island, than other Hispanics, and than the U.S. population generally (Guarnaccia, Good, and Kleinman, 1990). These findings raise the question as to whether the differences in rates of disorder are due to levels of psychiatric illness or to the way in which individuals respond to questions (Good and Good, 1985). Loss of cultural identity associated with migration and the Americanization of Puerto Rico have impacted on Puerto Ricans’ mental health (Flores, 1993). The circular migration of large numbers of Puerto Ricans from Puerto Rico to the U.S. mainland and back has created a subpopulation that is “neither here nor there” (Guarnaccia, 1997).
A number of scholars have argued that the equation of underclass and disadvantage is premised on the situation of New York Puerto Ricans who, it has been asserted, are worse off than Puerto Ricans in other mainland locations (Rodriguez, 1992). Research indicates, for instance, that a number of Puerto Rican communities on the mainland were stable and flourished economically for extended periods of time, including those in Lorain, Ohio and various locations in Hawaii (Baker, 2000). The stability and viability of these communities was disrupted only because of cyclical fluctuations in cities' labor opportunities. Blame for the construction of this characterization has also been laid squarely on Lewis' *La Vida* and his depiction of a group of Puerto Ricans in a "culture of poverty" (Urciuoli, 1996). Lewis' account of "brittle" marital relationships has been challenged by other researchers, who assert that his findings result from a focus on a community in which a large proportion of its citizenry subsist on the proceeds from prostitution, gambling, and other illegal activities (Pelto, Roman, and Liriano, 1982; Safa, 1974).

**Puerto Rican Family Life**

As indicated above, the growth of industry in Puerto Rico had a major impact on family life. Prior to the large-scale commercialization of agriculture, agricultural work was centered in the family or the village. The family served as the organizational unit for life's many functions, including eating, sleeping, illness, education, and labor (Hernandez, 2000). Although labor was often divided along sex lines, significant interdependence was critical to survival. And, because the maintenance of the family depended on the family's labor, there were few divisions between family life and work.
life. The need for interdependence fostered family cohesion and the development of extended family networks. Status during this period derived from old age, life experience, acquired wisdom, and the ability to care for one’s family members.

The advent of industrialism, however, created a separation between family life and work life. The work that was removed from the villages and was to be performed in the industrial areas was allocated to men, whereas work to be done in the home was relegated to women. Status was no longer dependent on personal qualities but was, instead, to be measured by the acquisition of material goods from earned money; that productive work was now a male responsibility. Mintz (1960: 169-171) has described this metamorphosis in the economic structure and its impact:

By the 1930’s most of the land on the south coast was in the hands of a few corporations, most of them North American. The political situation was very dark, and workers were forced to vote in line with their employers’ interests to keep their homes and jobs. The distinction between agregados—resident laborers—and independizados—those who did not live on hacienda land—is important here. The agregado was even more under the thumb of the corporation than his independizado co-worker...The constant moving about [in search of work] and the search for a home are aspects of a cultural norm...the expectation that a man will be able to provide his wife and children with an independent residence.

Mintz (1960: 175) continued:

The now almost entire dependence on cash earnings meant the acquisition of a more precise picture of one’s “worth” measured in dollars and cents...The men’s feelings of security that came from their personal relationships with superiors diminished, and some other source of emotional (as well as economic) support had to be substituted.

Contemporaneously, women were to engage in activities that would support their husbands, such as taking care of the home and the children. For men, home was transformed from a rewarding experience that brought respect to a refuge from low wages, periodic unemployment and underemployment, and a consequent sense of
powerlessness. For women, life at home was no longer a cooperative venture but became, instead, a domain in which their identity was to be subordinated to the family’s happiness and the maintenance of the home as a refuge for their male counterpart (Hernandez, 2000).

As indicated previously in the discussion of the historical context, women were incorporated into the labor force as men were being displaced. As an example, from the mid-1950s through the mid-1970s, the garment industry in Puerto Rico supplied almost one-third of all manufacturing jobs on the island and constituted a major source of employment for women. However, the vitality of the industry has declined, resulting in a deterioration of working conditions, instability in employment, underemployment, and poor benefits. Despite women’s increased workforce participation and the accompanying stress, they are often required to work a “double day,” attending to their jobs during the day and their homes and families in the evening (Safa, 1995). Among families with higher educational levels, there was, however, some movement towards egalitarianism between husband and wife in the sharing of household responsibilities and decisionmaking (Munoz Vasquez, 1988).

This metamorphosis resulted in a further entrenchment of assigned gender roles in the home, particularly in rural areas (Hernandez, 2000; Safa, 1995), and the institutionalization of machismo (Hernandez, 2000). The concept of a male-dominated social structure was further reinforced during the 1950s, with the importation of images of “the working middle-class dream” from the mainland to the island. (The concept of machismo is discussed below.)
Additional difficulties confronted families whose members chose to migrate to the mainland of the United States. Migration entails a rupture in previously strong ties and alliances with family members and friends and a journey from what is known and familiar to that which is strange and alien (Freidenberg, 2000; Hernandez and McGoldrick, 1998). These multiple losses may herald a period of mourning (Hernandez and McGoldrick, 1998). The migrants’ lives are forever divided between “here” and “there” and “then” and “now” (Freidenberg, 2000). Unlike the grief associated with the death of a loved one, however, the loss associate with migration is often vague and pervasive and accompanied by feelings of confusion and sadness. Women are socially permitted to express their pain openly, whereas men are expected to be strong and to endure their pain. It has been hypothesized that the absence of a socially acceptable mechanism for the release and display of pain may be partially responsible for the high alcohol intake among many migrant Puerto Rican men (Hernandez, 2000).

Various writers have asserted that Puerto Rican families are characterized by strong ties and extended sources of support, including social clubs; extended family networks developed through birth, marriage, and adoption; and linkperson networks, consisting of relationships with friends, neighbors, godparents, and spiritists (De La Rosa, 1988; Delgado and Humm Delgado, 1982; Valle and Bensussen, 1985). However, empirical research seems to indicate that such ties may not exist to the same degree among families that have migrated to the mainland or that have largely been born on the mainland. Lewis (1968), for instance, found in his study of 50 low-income Puerto Rican family members who had migrated to New York City from Puerto Rico that ties to extended family members were often not maintained after migration. Glick (1983) found
from his interviews with substance-using Puerto Ricans in Chicago that prior to the initiation of their drug use, one-third of the 38 respondents were raised in a household with only one parent, two individuals were raised by their fathers only, and the remainder had been raised by a relative other than a parent, were wards of the state, or had essentially raised themselves on the street after being emotionally and/or physically abandoned. Almost all of the respondents reported feeling abandoned and neglected during childhood. This situation is in stark contrast to the portrayal of family life as it existed in the pre-industrial era in Puerto Rico. Freidenberg (2000) concluded from her ethnographic interviews with 46 Puerto Rican respondents in New York City that social class affected network availability, and that shared socioeconomic status facilitated interactions. Other studies have found that the extended family ideal is not realized in many instances, regardless of socioeconomic status (Pelto, Roman, and Liriano, 1982).

The role of the male as the protector of and breadwinner for the family is also challenged by the new environment. Social class in the region from which individuals migrated could be quite different than the social class that individuals found themselves in when they arrived to the region to which they were migrating (Freidenberg, 2000). Migration may be accompanied by a loss of power in the public sphere due to racism, prejudice, and the increasing power afforded to traditionally subordinated groups, such as women and children (Hernandez, 1996, 2000). These same factors may result in a loss of power in the private sphere, as well, as women experience increasing freedom and demand male participation in the care of the home (Hernandez, 2000).

Women also experienced conflict, due to continuing expectations that they not only fulfill their traditional roles as wives and mothers, thereby retaining marriage and
motherhood as their primary functions, but also work outside of the home in order to ensure the family’s survival. Sanchez Korrol (1994:111) concluded from her analysis of interviews from 70 Puerto Rican migrants to New York City who were of diverse social standings and economic statuses that, during the 1930s, many women rationalized this duality of role as a way of dealing with their conflict:

Regardless of the type of work in which Puerto Rican women participated, the family remained uppermost in their minds, and work continued to be a necessity in order to maintain family unity. Women persisted in rationalizing their work world as an extension of their home and family life. To work was not considered a luxury embarked upon to prove one’s equality or to challenge or change in any way, traditional roles within the family.

Migration also necessitated the establishment of a new identity, both an individual identity and a collective one. The American conceptualization of Puerto Ricans was that of individuals who were excessively promiscuous, “ignorant, unintelligent, and stupid” (Perez, 1998: 146) and “the dirtiest, laziest, most degenerate and thievish” of all groups (unidentified 1932 researcher, quoted in Clark, 1975: 152). The image of Puerto Ricans as ignorant and dirty was exacerbated during the 1920s through the 1940s when public health hysteria attributed the New York City tuberculosis and venereal disease epidemics to the Puerto Ricans arriving from the island:

Dr. Haven Emerson, a Columbia University expert on tropical diseases, says...that every Porto [sic] Rican has within him germs of tropical diseases, venereal disease and those which are looked on as minor dirt diseases.” This health problem does not worry the Porto [sic] Rican as much as it does New Yorkers for he has acquired an immunity to it. Pulmonary diseases show an increase in rate due to the prevalence amongst these people. They have primitive notions of child care due to conditions in which they lived in Porto [sic] Rico. Many never saw a cow and do not know about the use of canned milk...The Italian mother is more intelligent for she at least can use goat’s milk (Marsh, 1932, quoted in Bourgois, 1995a: 62).
The stereotype of Puerto Ricans as violence-loving was reinforced in the 1950s, 1970s, and 1980s by media coverage of violence in the U.S. by pro-independence supporters (Bender, 2003).

These attitudes almost assuredly impacted on individuals’ self-image and self-esteem. Bourgois (1995b: 98-99) aptly described what must have been a traumatic transformation for many individuals and families:

“Over the past three or four generations, the Puerto Rican people—especially those living in New York—have passed through almost a half dozen distinct modes of production: 1) from semi-subistence peasants on private mountain plots or local haciendas; 2) to export agricultural laborers on foreign-owned, capital-intensive plantations; 3) to factory workers in urban shanty towns; 4) to sweatshop workers in ghetto tenements; 5) to service sector employees in high-rise inner-city housing projects; 6) to underground economy entrepreneurs on the street. This marathon sprint through economic history onto New York City’s streets has been compounded ideologically by an overtly racist “cultural assault.” Literally overnight the new immigrants—many of whom were enveloped in idealized jibaro identities emphasizing interpersonal webs of patriarchal respeto—found themselves transformed into “racially” inferior cultural pariahs. Ever since their arrival they have been despised and humiliated with that virulence so characteristic of North America’s history of polarized race relations.

Piri Thomas (1967) recounted, almost with embarrassment, his father’s inability to locate work and to earn respect in New York City. Later generations would also experience low self-esteem as the result of prejudice, discrimination, a lack of opportunities and, for many, the absence of positive role models (Glick, 1983).

However, post-migration Puerto Rican life should not be seen as futile, dismal, or hopeless. Puerto Rican communities, particularly in New York, established a rich culture. Indeed, various forms of music, including Puerto Rican jazz and salsa, have been incorporated into New York life (Flores, 2000; Fraser Delgado and Munoz, 1997; Hernandez, 2000; Salazar, 1996). Many individuals and families participate in events
that signify ethnic pride, such as the Puerto Rican Day parade in New York City (Estades, 1996). More recently, Puerto Rican baseball players have become role models and Puerto Rican politicians have gained national prominence (Hernandez, 2000).

CULTURE, GENDER ROLE, AND PARTNER VIOLENCE

Empirical research relating to intimate partner violence on the United States mainland has often referred to “Hispanic” women, without delineating which specific subgroups are encompassed within a particular study. As a result, it is unclear which of these studies included sizable numbers of Puerto Rican women. Nevertheless, the empirical research findings relating to partner violence are striking:

- Hispanic women have been found to be at greater risk of physical violence during marriage as compared to women of other ethnic groups (Straus and Smith, 1990).
- In comparison with non-Hispanic white women, Hispanic women are more likely to have been the victims of violence for a longer period of time (Gondolf, Fisher, and McFerron, 1988; Torres, 1991).
- Compared to non-Hispanic whites and U.S.-born Mexican-Americans, Mexican-born Mexican-Americans have reported lower rates of partner violence (Sorenson and Telles, 1991).
- Several research groups have reported that factors such as immigration status, prejudice, a lack of English proficiency, and the lack of emotional support resulting from separation from extended families may contribute to the abuse (Ho, 1990; Perilla, Bakeman, and Norris, 1994).
• Compared to non-Hispanic white women, Mexican-American women are less likely to classify behavior such as slapping, pushing, shoving, grabbing, and throwing things at them as physical abuse (Torres, 1991).

Among Puerto Rican specifically, it has been found that

• Puerto Rican husbands are 10 times as likely as Cuban husbands to assault their wives (Kantor et al., 1994).

• Puerto Ricans appear to have the highest rate of cultural approval of wife assaults as compared to non-Hispanic whites, Cubans, and Mexican-Americans (Kantor et al., 1994), although the reasons for this difference have not been investigated.

• Puerto Ricans have been found to be more tolerant of wife assault as compared with several other groups, including non-Hispanic whites (Kantor et al., 1994).

The question naturally arises: Why? Several potential explanations emerge.

**Gender Roles and Relations**

*The Evolution of the Male Role*

Latino families, in general, have been characterized in previous writings as strongly patriarchal, with strict cultural norms and a strong church influence (Castro de Alvarez, 1990). The patriarchal nature of the family has been said to influence or control every facet of a woman's life, including her dress, activities, interpersonal relationships, courtship, marriage, and childbearing. In addition, it tolerates or encourages multiple sexual relationships for men, while negatively sanctioning women for the same behavior (Castro de Alvarez, 1990).
Concepts of male honor in 19th century Puerto Rico were based on beliefs about social ordering, appropriate behavior, and personal worth; these concepts were both gendered and racialized (Suarez Findlay, 1999). Men and women who were perceived to be white were deemed to be superior to those with darker skin, who were Puerto Ricans of African descent. “Darkness” was also a function of poor dress in addition to blackness of skin. Parents controlled their children and, regardless of social class and standing, men insisted on their right to control women (Suarez Findlay, 1999). One’s honor was not absolute, but was relative to that of others in the same community, however. Honor increased in proportion to one’s wealth and one’s whiteness. In addition, honor depended on the display of gender-appropriate behavior and the acknowledgement of one’s honor by one’s community.

Among 19th century Puerto Rican elites, men’s honor was premised on the sexual control of women and the exclusion of those who were poorer, darker, or enslaved. Suarez Findlay (1999:24) has asserted that “control over a woman’s sexuality was a cornerstone of the dominant honor code.” Men of all classes were not only to “protect” “their” women, but were also to sexually conquer others; they often asserted their right to have multiple sexual partners, while simultaneously requiring that “their” women remain chaste. Although this code of honor and this double sexual standard applied to all free men,

regardless of their race or class, yet this male bonding over women’s bodies was not egalitarian. Wealthy men often resolved the contradiction between the need to conquer and protect/control women by sexual adventures among women of the popular classes. They asserted the right to rape, seduce, and establish longer-term informal sexual relationships with plebian women, while marrying women of their own class. Economic power meant sexual access to women, including those who
“should” have been the exclusive property of poor men (Suarez Findlay, 1999: 30).

In addition to having the requisite sexual reputation, elite men were expected to provide financially for their families. Among poorer men, the concept of honor also required that they engage in physical reprisals against those who had insulted their honor (Suarez Findlay, 1999).

Ramirez (1999) has written extensively on what he believes it means to be a man in Puerto Rican culture, based on his review of the literature, his personal experience as a Puerto Rican man in Puerto Rico and the United States, and his observations of Puerto Rican men and women. Masculinity, according to Ramirez (1999: 44-45), is defined in terms of sexuality: “The male is an essentially sexual being, or at least he should look and act like one. He should enjoy his sexuality, declare it, boast about it, feel proud of it, and above all, show it.” Women who reject a man are to be punished, repudiated, or devalued.

As in English, language reflects common attitudes towards women. Puerto Rican men who father only daughters may be accused of being chancleteros, meaning a man who produces only chancletas (slippers), a thing of minimal value (Comas-Diaz, 1988). The view of women as objects is reflected, for instance, in common, everyday Puerto Rican-Spanish expressions: para comérsela (to be eaten); Yo suelto mi gallo, los démas que recogan sus gallinas (I’m letting my cock loose, you’d better hide your hens). The Puerto Rican equivalent of the Mexican chingar (to fuck, literally or figuratively) is clavar, meaning to penetrate, but is used to denote violence, domination, and power. A man who is hurt in a fight or who loses a fight says, me clavaron (they fucked me). Of a man who has been dominated or subjugated, it is said lo tienen clava’o (he’s whipped).
Because *clavar* also means to penetrate sexually, men may use the phrase *le di tremenda clavada* (I really nailed her) in describing their sexual exploits. The expression *clavar*, then, not only helps to reaffirm masculinity, but is used to de-masculinize others. As in English, a man who has courage is said to have *cojones* (balls); to be in control is *pasarse por los huevos* or *pasarse por los cojones*. A man who is pissed off, offended is *encojonado*; in essence, his emotional state is related to the state of his genitals. The gravest insults are to call a man a *maricón* (fag), *cornudo* (horned or to be cheated on), *mongo* (limp), or a *mamabicho* or *huelebicho* (cocksucker) (Ramirez, 1999: 51-54). A man who is *mongo*, or a *monguera*, is a man who has no power; the limp penis is also *mongo* and when a man has lost an erection, he *se me esmongó*. A man who has been unexpectedly cheated is a man who *se lo metieron mongo* (has been fucked with a limp penis).

According to various scholars who are both Puerto Rican themselves and who investigate gender relations within Puerto Rican groups, men compete with each other by using this language to prove that one has attributes associated with masculinity that are not possessed by rivals. In addition, men in Puerto Rican society frequently utilize aggression and violence to establish their power with respect to women and to other men (Martinez and Silva Bonilla, 1988; Silva Bonilla, 1985), as reflected in more recent statistics relating to partner violence and to levels of violence in the Island population (Ramirez, 1999). After reviewing statistical data relating to violent crime in Puerto Rico, Ramirez (1999: 77) concluded:

> The data seem to indicate that living according to the requirements of masculinity means assuming a self-destructive behavior of high risk and violence. This violence is understandable in the context of the widespread violence in Puerto Rico and an enculturation in which we men learn to be
in constant competition to demonstrate that we have and maintain the attributes of masculinity. At the same time, there are few men who can show that they fulfill all the requirements demanded by the construction of gender; this “shortcoming” produces great anxiety and feelings of impotence. Men who are less able to show their control and power tend to exaggerate their masculinity. Resorting to a range of expressions of violence seems to be part of that exaggeration.

Sanchez’ (2000) account of his life in Puerto Rican gangs in Chicago are consistent with these observations. Violence at the hands of first, his father in Puerto Rico and, subsequently, his “stepfather” in Chicago were the norm. Sanchez attributes his initial entry into the world of gangs, drugs, and alcohol not to peer pressure, but to a need to belong, because he did not belong at home. Ultimately, Sanchez concluded that being recognized as a leader, as a man, in this context meant that he had to be cold-blooded, violent, and uncaring. It wasn’t right to feel empathy for the suffering of others. I [Sanchez] wasn’t supposed to react to the sight of blood dripping out of a human body [he had seen killed or had killed himself.] I was supposed to ignore and even laugh at the screams for mercy and the terror. Death was supposed to be a normal thing that would make me a leader—a leader, not a follower (Sanchez, 2000: 73).

The maricon, or fag, is considered to be the ultimate negation of masculinity. A man who is devalued even further is placed within the zone of the feminine and the powerless with the use of the term mariquita, or little maricon. Men’s small purses, for instance, are known as mariconeras (Ramirez, 1999: 93). Rivera (1982: 120) in his autobiography describing his life as a Puerto Rican arrival in New York underscored the use of the term maricon as an insult: “Virgilio … added ‘maricon’ to ‘Brother,’ … to show me he wasn’t a sheep who took Bro’ Leary’s threats to heart.”

Ramirez’ thesis relating to Puerto Ricans is largely consistent with those of other Latino researchers working in other locales. Prieur (1996) observed, based on his fieldwork in a working class barrio outside of Mexico City, that value is given to the man
who penetrates women and other males and does not allow himself to be penetrated; men
attack other men verbally by putting them in a passive sexual role with other men.
Mirande (1997, 2001), who also conducted extensive field work in Mexico, concluded
that a lack of power constitutes the essence of homosexuality; men who were “inserters”
were still considered *machista* (noun: *macho*) men and heterosexual, while those who
played the more passive role in male-male sexual encounters were to be considered
homosexual.

The concept of *machismo* is believed to be valued and displayed across all
socioeconomic strata (Giraldo, 1972). Its behavioral expression, though, has been shown
to vary by region, ethnic group, social class, age cohort, level of acculturation, and time
period (Andrade, 1992; DeYoung and Zigler, 1994; Gutmann, 1996; Mikawa et al., 1992;
Thompson, 1991). Consequently, caution must be exercised in making generalizations
about the nature and expression of *machismo*. Additionally, *machismo* must be
distinguished from the concept of “cool pose,” also known as “coolin’” or “chillin’,”
which refers to a racial resistance or a specific posture towards social inequities (De La
Cancela, 1993). This concept of “cool pose” may converge with concepts of *machismo*
and masculinity in gender roles among U.S. urban Latino youth.

Normative writings advise that the concept of *machismo* encompasses men’s roles
as providers and protectors of their families, responsible for upholding the family honor
and maintaining the integrity of the family unit (Gutmann, 1996; Obeso and Bordatto,
1979; Panitz et al., 1983; Scott et al., 1988). Taso, Mintz’ primary informant in his
ethnographic account of life in a sugar cane community, spoke proudly of his ability to
care for his family:
And truly, as I have said other times, in spite of my poverty and everything I always earned the bread for my children; when there were two, when there were three, when there were seven and eight—I always earned my children’s bread, and really it has been a satisfaction in itself that I could supply those things (Mintz, 1960: 164).

The concept of *machismo* and men’s roles is intimately connected to perceptions of women and their roles vis-à-vis men. Melhuus (1996: 241) has explained:

1. Machismo underpins the continuous evaluation of men, and rests on the discrete categorization of women.
2. Machismo has men as its reference group; it is in the eyes of other men that a man’s manhood is confirmed, but it is through women that it is reflected and enacted. Thus men are socially and emotionally vulnerable to other men, through the behaviour and moral evaluation of women.
3. The very articulation of machismo not only point to the precariousness of being a man but also underscores the ambiguity of being a woman, showing how woman’s sexuality is an ambivalent source of virtue.

The confirmation of *machismo* may be seen, according to normative writings, in behavior such as sexual freedom, dominance over women, alcohol consumption, and the control of female behavior and sexuality (Christensen, 1979; de la Vega, 1990; DeYoung and Zigler, 1994; Giraldo, 1972; Mosher, 1991; Pearlman, 1984). *Machismo* may be manifested by callousness towards women, verbal abuse of women, and demands for menial services (Stevens, 1973). Accordingly, *machismo* may prohibit any demonstration of weakness (Quesada, 1976).

Empirical research confirms the existence of varied perceptions of *machismo*. A study of Latinos’ perceptions of *machismo* found that 15% of the 39 respondents associated *machismo* with positive qualities, such as assertiveness, responsibility, selflessness, the possession of a general code of ethics, sincerity, and respect (Mirande, 1997). Negative association were, however, more common, and included a sense of
exaggerated masculinity, male dominance and authoritarianism, violence and aggression, self-centeredness, and egotism (Mirande, 1997). This attitude is reflected in the autobiography of Sanchez, a Puerto Rican man born in Puerto Rico who subsequently moved to Chicago while still young. After raping one of his girlfriends, he observed, “My brutality with Jenny took place without regret, as if she was my property to do with whatever I wanted. My wish was her command, or else” (Sanchez, 2000: 84). Later, speaking of his discovery that this same girlfriend had sexual relations with others, he asserted that her unfaithfulness had not hurt his feelings. Rather, he claimed, “I considered Jenny a piece of meat and nothing more—my personal piece of meat. Now I felt that she had violated my manhood and disrespected me” (Sanchez, 2000: 105). Later, in relation to yet another girlfriend, he commented. “As far as I was concerned, women had to admire me and please me. I, on the other hand, didn’t even have to respect them” (Sanchez, 2000: 159).

Varying theories have been propounded to explain Puerto Rican machismo. Fernandez-Mendez (1970) posited that machismo arises as a device to deal with the insecurity, dependency, and inferiority experienced by Puerto Rican men as a result of cultural dynamics. Alvarez (1977) characterized machismo as a means of affirming one’s manhood in the context of frustration and oppression. Steiner’s (1974) interpretation is somewhat similar; he argues that machismo is a response to a deprivation of freedom in the economic, social, and political spheres of life. Men attempt to deal with this deprivation by venting their frustration on women, making demands on them that they cannot make on those who oppress them.
The Development of a Code of Respectability for Women

In 19th century Puerto Rico, the honor of a wealthy or elite family was directly tied to the sexual reputations of its female members (Suarez Findlay, 1999). Among elite women, the maintenance of respectability ensured the maintenance of racial identity, family position, social status, and male dominance. Wealthy white women were assumed to be respectable, while their poorer counterparts were sexually suspect. Although some married women did take lovers, they risked ostracism from their families and the loss of all property, in addition to a criminal sentence for adultery.

Among poorer people, sexual partnerships were not unusual and were often across color lines. Rapto was a well-established tradition among working classes. This has been described as follows:

After having established a romantic relationship with a youth, a young woman would leave her parents’ home and go with her boyfriend to the house of a friend or relative of his. If the young man had saved money and had planned the move for some time, he might have his own house or a rented room. Once away from parental surveillance, the couple would have sex, the man in the process of “taking possession of” the woman’s virginity. They would then set up “marital life together,” either remaining in the household to which they had originally gone or moving off on their own.

Because he had stolen the young woman’s honor, according to the dominant script, the raptor was required by law to either marry his sweetheart or to suffer the punishment of one-and-a-half year’s imprisonment, plus the payment of one thousand pesos to the woman as a reparation for lost honor, as well as formal recognition and provision of financial support for any child who might have been conceived during the liaison. (Suarez Findlay, 1999:40).

In view of this script, among working classes, factors other than virginity could be utilized to establish respectability. These included faithful mothering, hard domestic work, and income-generating work. Too, faithfulness to one man for an extended period of time was necessary to maintain respectability.
It has been said that Latina women are expected to aspire to marriage and motherhood and nurture and care for others. As an example, Mintz, ruminating on his observations of life in the Puerto Rican Barrio Jauca in the 1940s, explained:

It is important to stress that a working man of [informant] Taso’s [lower] social group is supposed to have a woman at his side—mother, sister, wife, or other. The division of work between men and women fits this expectation. That Taso lacked someone to prepare his meals, mend his clothes, care for his quarters, and attend to this other practical needs made life very difficult for him...And these tasks are not supposed to be done by men...(Mintz, 1960: 86-87).

The status of motherhood is considered particularly important; sterile women are derogatorily referred to a *machorros* (barren women) (Burgos, 1982; Christensen, 1975). Accordingly, Latinas, including Puerto Rican women, may internalize the expectation that they nurture others and attempt to maintain family unity and connections, even in the face of unhappiness (Vasquez, 1994), and be expected to endure the suffering that is inflicted upon them (Stevens, 1973). As an example, wives will often care for their husbands while they are drunk and strive to keep the family together at all costs. In addition, the wives of alcoholics are more likely to seek support to help them endure their suffering than to seek change in their roles or situations (Inclan and Hernandez, 1992).

Women who fulfill these expectations of a “good” woman can expect to be protected, while those who are “bad,” such as those who have sex outside of marriage, can be expected to be labeled as such and may be referred to as *una mujer mala* (a bad woman) or *una puta* or *putita* (whore) (Stolen, 1991). Mintz (1960) observed, for instance, that in the rural Barrio Jauca, a single woman who had relations with her suitor could well lose her chance for elopement and become known as dañada, or damaged goods. Cofer, a Puerto Rico-born woman who later migrated to New York
City, (1991: 139-142) explained in her autobiography the standard that was imposed on her while in Puerto Rico upon reaching the age of 15:

It was a place where a demand for privacy was considered rude, where people asked where you were going if you tried to walk out of a room, where an adolescent girl was watched every minute by the women who acted as if you carried some kind of time-bomb in your body that might go off at any minute; and worse, they constantly warned you about your behavior around men; don’t cross your legs like that when a man is in the room, don’t walk around in your pajamas, never interrupt their conversations. It did not matter that the men were my uncles, my cousins, and my brother. Somehow my body with its new contours and new biological powers had changed everything; half of the world had now become a threat, or felt threatened by its potential for disaster ...If you did not get married, you became a nun, or you entered “la vida” as a prostitute. Of course there were some professions a woman could practice—nurse, teacher—until you found a man to marry. The worse fate was to end up alone...in your old age.

These attitudes towards women who do not fulfill these expectations are not, apparently, confined to Puerto Rico or Puerto Ricans born or raised on the island. A recent ethnography of low-income, predominantly second-generation mainland U.S. Puerto Rican adolescents found that both males and females condoned the use of physical violence as a punishment for those females who were perceived to be sluts, that is, whose sexual behavior was perceived to be similar to males in that they left relationships and moved on to new relationships “too soon” and had, as a result, multiple sexual partners (Asencio, 1999).

These expectations of women are epitomized in the concept of marianismo. Although marianismo derives from the Virgin Mary, it is not confined to only Catholic Latinas. And, although women are considered to be men’s spiritual superiors, the dual ideal of women as virgins and as mothers as derived from the Virgin Mary ultimately relegates women to a position of inferiority:
As the Catholic symbol of the perfect woman, the Virgin Mary presents a
definition that is, in the end, damaging to women. The twin ideal of
mother and virgin is impossible for a woman to achieve. The destiny and
purpose that this myth establishes for women (i.e. motherhood) is then
also devalued—since sex is necessary for a woman to fulfill her destiny.
A symbol of renunciation, the Virgin puts the female believer in the
position of acknowledged inferiority and so underlines the dangers of sex,
the fear of corruption, and her sense of sin (Deighton, Horsely, Stewart,
and Cain, 1983).

The “ten commandments of marianismo” have been enumerated as follows:

1. Do not forget a woman’s place.
2. Do not forsake tradition.
3. Do not be single, self-supporting, or independent-minded.
4. Do not put your own needs first.
5. Do not wish for more in life than being a housewife.
6. Do not forget that sex is for making babies—not for pleasure.
7. Do not be unhappy with your man or criticize him for infidelity,
gambling, verbal and physical abuse, alcohol or drug abuse.
8. Do not ask for help.
9. Do not discuss personal problems outside of the home.
10. Do not change those things which make you unhappy that you can
realistically change (Gil and Vasquez, 1996: 8).

The Pentecostal faith, which has been gaining an increasing foothold in Puerto
Rico, as well as in other locales in Latin America (Mintz, 1960), is similarly restrictive of
women’s freedom (Chant and Craske, 2003). Pentecostalism emphasizes ascetism, sex
within the confines of marriage, home, and motherhood as the role of women.

Several alternatives to the role of mother and wife have been noted. In contrast to
the image of the woman dedicated to her family, with all of the concomitant restrictions
that accompany that attributed and/or assumed role, la corteja (mistress) represents the
woman of sexual pleasure. Because her role is outside of marriage, she is exempted from
the constraints of marianismo (Comas-Diaz, 1988; Steiner, 1974).
Perhaps less visible are the women who can be characterized as *hembrista*. *Hembrismo*, which refers to femaleness, has been called the female counterpart to machismo (Habach, 1972), and a form of self-affirmation and assertiveness (Gomez, 1982). The concept is said to derive from matriarchal Taino roots; in Taino society, tribal leadership, family name, and ownership of land were passed through women (Steiner, 1974). Accordingly, *hembrismo* has been said to connote strength, perseverance, flexibility, and an ability to survive (Comas-Diaz, 1988). In contrast to *marianismo*’s emphasis on female self-sacrifice for the benefit of the children, *hembrismo* entails action within a sociopolitical sphere to improve the status of families and communities. As a consequence, however, women may experience significant stress in their attempts to fulfill role expectations as both keepers of the hearth and community leaders (Comas-Diaz, 1982, 1988). This conflict may be particularly evident among Puerto Rican women in the United States. Again, assertive behavior among Puerto Rican women has traditionally been discouraged. Additionally, as an ethnic minority, Puerto Rican women may experience difficulties in asserting themselves around issues of power (Comas-Diaz and Duncan, 1985). However, American society values and encourages assertive behavior (Comas-Diaz, 1988).

Nevertheless, the subordinate role assigned to Puerto Rican women has been found in all social strata, regardless of marital status. A study of married and divorced women of low- and middle-incomes found no differences in role expectations (Munoz Vazquez, 1979). A study of college-educated women living on the island concluded that these same barriers existed, particularly as they relate to women’s freedom of expression (Sanchez-Hidalgo, 1962).
Despite the extensive literature that speaks to the subordination of women, relatively few writers have discussed the origin of these attitudes and, in general, they have been attributed to the Catholic faith. However, the machinations of relatively powerful and elite men in the context of political reform also served to transform the role of women into one that would be subordinate to men.

The Puerto Rican Liberal Party was founded in the 1870s. In addition to agitating for the abolition of slavery, the Party sought to educate the masses, including women. The Party portrayed poorer white rural women as being enslaved by their sensuality; their male counterparts were portrayed as “discolored sexual beasts” (Suarez Findlay, 1999: 60). These depraved men could be redeemed only through the intervention of upstanding, white rural women. Accordingly, it became the mission of the Party to elevate these women. Elite, or bourgeois, women also required transformation. One Liberal Party member stated,

"Submissive and obedient to the will of her husband, she cannot fail to comply with his every mandate, since we all know that the argumentative woman, moving beyond her sphere of rights, utterly fails to dominate with her demands. Rather, she exasperates and irritates the natural pride of her man" (Ferrer, quoted in Suarez Findlay, 1999:62).

And, in addition, bourgeois women would also be called upon to moralize their male partners.

Feminists within the Liberal Party were not particularly accepting of these mandates. They openly attacked the double sexual standard that prevailed. However, they believed that men’s sexual escapades resulted from the attentions of lower class, black women of African descent, who seduced the men to fulfill their voracious and uncontrollable sexual desires (Suarez Findlay, 1999).
Ascribed Cultural Values

Familismo

Familismo, or familism, has been called one of the most important culture-specific values of Puerto Ricans. Familism has been defined as a cultural value that includes a strong identification and attachment of individuals with their nuclear and extended families, and strong feelings of loyalty, reciprocity, and a solidarity among members of the same family. Familism consists of both attitudinal and behavioral components. Attitudinal aspects include beliefs and attitudes regarding the family with respect to feelings of loyalty, solidarity, and reciprocity; the behavioral component refers to actions associated with those feelings. A violation of this tradition may meet with astonishment and bewilderment, such as that described by Sanchez (2003: 172) in reaction to the comments of one of his friends’ criticism of how his (Sanchez’) mother has mistreated Sanchez during his youth:

I sat there quietly pondering Marilyn’s words. I couldn’t understand how this strong Puerto Rican woman could question the oldest of Puerto Rican traditions—honor and protect your mother no matter what, especially if you’re male.

It has been posited that the Hispanic family may play a singularly critical protective role against substance use in offspring due to its associated strong ties and high levels of mutual loyalty, solidarity, reliance and trust (familismo) (Becerra, 1988; Marin and Marin, 1991; Murillo, 1971; Triandis et al., 1982). The effects of familismo may, however, be mediated by acculturation level and place of birth (Gil, Vega, and Dimas, 1994; Vega et al., 1993). Several studies have suggested that, among Hispanics, family functioning may, for instance, play a critical role in the initiation of substance use (Brooks, Stuewig, and LeCroy, 1998). This characterization of the family and familismo
as protective against substance use and HIV risk is, however, controversial. It has been postulated that family and *familismo* may actually constitute a hindrance to HIV prevention efforts associated with injection drug use because loyalty to family members may mandate a “good” presentation to the outside world, resulting in the obfuscation of any problems, such as substance use and associated high risk behaviors (Smith-Petersen, 1983; Soriano, 1993).

The relationship between familismo and the occurrence and reporting of partner violence by Puerto Ricans has not been examined empirically. Consequently, it is unknown whether, whether *familismo* is present and, if it is, the extent to which it may be protective against partner violence or hinder the reporting of partner violence due to feelings of loyalty.

Fatalism, or *fatalismo* in Spanish, refers to an acceptance of one’s life experiences and a belief, that, because life events are preordained, individual efforts to modify one’s situation are ineffective (Fitzpatrick, 1976; Medina, 1987; Rogler and Cooney, 1984). Lewis (1959, 1961, 1968, 1969) conceived of fatalism as one element of the culture of poverty, characterized by a constellation of qualities that includes helplessness, weakness, and provincialism in addition to fatalism. It is important to recognize, however, that fatalism is not a uniquely Puerto Rican or even Latino trait, but is evidenced in other groups and cultures as well (Streibel, 1996).

Previous research has found an association between fatalism and beliefs about HIV in some Latino communities (Bok and Morales, 1991; Sufian et al., 1990). The concept has not, however, been examined in the context of partner violence and possible strategies to address partner violence. It is possible that individuals who maintain a more
fatalistic outlook might be less likely to consider strategies that would ameliorate or eliminate the circumstances that give rise to the violence, or identify potential causes of the violence.

*Respeto*, loosely translated as “respect,” has been defined as “a pattern of ceremonial politeness constantly observed by all but the closest family and friends” (Leavitt, 1974: 46). *Respeto* is evidenced by deference in addressing elders, social superiors, and others and serves to maintain the *dignidad*, or dignity, or each individual.

How *respeto* is evidenced may vary over time, place, gender, and social class. As one example of how *respeto* may manifest, the individuals whose lives are traced in Bourgois’ *In Search of Respect: Selling Crack in El Barrio* (1995) earned respect by being known on the street as violent, able to hold their own, and savvy in the capital of the street: doing and selling drugs, surrounding themselves with people who respected and liked them, running a drug business efficiently. It is similar to Mintz’ (1960) explanation of *respeto* in the requirement of deference to those who are owed such respect and the attribution to or assumption of power by those owed respect. Violence, drugs, and women played a large role in achieving respect in the El Barrio of Bourgois, despite the eventual destruction that was associated with these activities. Money and land ownership brought power in the world described by Mintz.

**Economic Strain, Role Transformation, and Violence**

Lewis (1968) found in his study of Puerto Rican families and the migration of their family members to New York City that migration had brought about significant changes in the roles of the various family members, with a consequent increase in marital
strife. The majority of these New York relatives were of lower income status; the high cost of living required that both partners be employed whenever possible. Lewis concluded from his case studies of these 50 families in New York in 1964 and 1965 that the new-found independence of the working wife was probably the greatest source of domestic conflict among the [50] sample families in New York. Working wives no longer had to rely on their husbands for money for the house or for personal expenses. The women themselves could buy what they and their children needed and could pay to go where they pleased. This freedom had important repercussions for the family, particularly for the husband, who was accustomed to being in control of the family and the purse. Under ordinary circumstances a jealous man, the Puerto Rican husband in New York often became very insecure and distrustful of his wife...Women, in turn, resented their husbands’ suspicions and insisted upon more equality in the household. The strains on family relationships were often severe and almost every informant commented upon this problem...Marital discord was so intense that it often led to physical violence. In Puerto Rican slums, wife beating was fairly common, but women did not call in the police as often as they did in New York.

Lewis was unable to ascertain whether wife beating had increased in frequency since migration to New York, or whether the reporting of the beating had increased. He noted, though, that controls against wife beating were significantly stronger in New York than they were in Puerto Rico.

Lewis’ findings are not, however, surprising, and are potentially relevant to other populations. As indicated earlier, studies conducted subsequent to that of Lewis appear to indicate that lower income may increase the likelihood of partner violence (Corlett, 1999). Various researchers have noted that recent economic pressures have forced a larger number of male-headed households throughout Latin America to rely increasingly on earnings from female partners, resulting in a threat to masculine identities (e.g., Gutmann, 1996). This, according to a number of researchers, has resulted in an intensification of domestic strife during particularly difficult economic periods (Benería, 133)
Selby and colleagues (1990: 176) have argued:

Male dignity has been so assaulted by unemployment and the necessity of relying on women for subsistence that men formerly provided, that men have taken it out on their wives and domestic violence has increased ... the families which have been driven by fighting and brutality can easily said to be the true victims of economic crisis....

This observation is not inconsistent with the Mexican saying, "Pobre el hogar en que canta la gallina" ("Poor is the household in which the hen rules the roost." literally, "Poor is the household in which the hen sings").

Bourgois (1995) similarly concluded that Puerto Rican men who lash out at their wives and female partners may do so because of the role transformations brought about through economic change and their accompanying frustrations and feelings of inadequacy. Bourgois (1995: 214-215) explained:

As men on the street lose their former authoritarian power in the household, they lash out against the women and children they can no longer control. Males are not accepting the new rights and roles that women are obtaining; instead, they are desperately trying to reassert their grandfathers' lost autocratic control over their households and over public space...

In the Puerto Rican case, the change in power relations between men and women conflates with a structurally induced wrenching of traditional gender roles as men steeped in jibaro rural identities confront unemployment and social marginalization in the postindustrial, urban United States. Old-fashioned household economies defined around the productivity of an autocratic male have long been under siege in Puerto Rican diaspora—especially in the inner city...The high-finance, FIRE [finance, real estate, and insurance] sector-dominated economy of New York City does not pay high school dropouts the working-class wages that would allow them to support a nuclear family of four on a single income. The traditional "Spanish ideal" of a large, male-dominated household blessed with numerous children is recognized as an anachronism by even the most reactionary men and women of the new generation born in New York City.
The Legal Infrastructure of Puerto Rico

One Puerto Rican researcher has stated flatly: "Domestic violence is criminal behavior that, in actuality, constitutes one of the most serious problems confronting Puerto Rican families and society" (Ortega-Velez, 1998: 1). Until 1989, the Penal Code of Puerto Rico failed to address and punish partner violence. It is only recently that the law in Puerto Rico permits the introduction of evidence relating to partner violence in criminal cases against women for injury to their husbands.

Much of the responsibility for the failure to recognize and address partner violence has been attributed to attitudes towards women and related teachings within the Catholic faith. These include, for instance, the edicts of apostle Paul's prohibiting the remarriage of widowed women, requiring that a prospective groom receive the approval of the woman's father if she was a virgin, and appointing the male as the head of the household (Ortega-Velez, 1998).

The legal system that was originally brought to Puerto Rico is also relevant. Unlike the United States mainland which, with the exception of Louisiana, inherited the common law system and many substantive and procedural laws from Great Britain, Puerto Rico inherited the system of Spanish law. This system was somewhat modified to accommodate local conditions and became known as the Recompilation of the Laws of the Indias (Ortega-Velez, 1998). As indicated previously, these new laws relegated women to a social and legal position below that of men. Women were essentially relegated to in-home functions, including the socialization of the children and the care of their husbands. They were expressly prohibited from participating in political life.
The situation of women on the island worsened during the 18th century. During this epoch the island was viewed as being critical to Spain's military; civil aspects of life were subordinated to military functions, resulting in what appeared to be a completely arbitrary system of rule. The system of slavery was finally abolished in 1873. However, prior to its abolition, women, in particular, were victims of abuse (Ortega-Velez, 1998).

It has been said that it was not until the 19th century that Puerto Ricans on the island developed a collective consciousness as Puerto Ricans. Women, however, were ill-prepared for this new epoch. The census indicates that in 1880, the island of Puerto Rico had 372,000 female inhabitants; only 14.7% could read or write (Ortega-Velez, 1998). Illicit affairs became common during this time, in part due to the high expense required to fulfill the legal requirement that persons of “distinct races” obtain special permission to marry. A series of legislative changes to the laws governing marital and family relations established the male as the head of the household (Ortega-Velez, 1998).

At the beginning of the 20th century, women living in the villages of Puerto Rico were often required for economic reasons to provide services that complemented the earnings of the “jefe” [chief] of the family. Accordingly, many women worked as launderesses or cooks or performed other labor associated with household functions. In general, wages were low and hours were long.

Prior to the invasion by the United States, it was virtually impossible to obtain a divorce from the ecclesiastical courts, which had sole authority to grant divorces in Puerto Rico. In fact, between 1840 and 1898, the year of the invasion, there are only 26 divorces on record; of these, 22 were filed by women, primarily on grounds of adultery.
and domestic violence. Suarez Findlay (1999: 114) has described the circumstances of these divorces, based on her extensive review of historical and legal documents:

The driving force behind women’s divorce petitions in the nineteenth century was domestic violence. Every one of the female plaintiffs unequivocally stated that she could no longer bear her husband’s physical abuse. Women of all social strata—from wealthy white owners of numerous properties to Afro-Puerto Rican laundresses—spilled out stories to church authorities of brutal beatings, lashings with horsewhips, and knife wounds.

Once a woman’s divorce petition was accepted by the court, the church was obligated to place the woman in déposito, meaning the home and care of a “respectable family.” The husband was required to pay for the wife’s room and board while she was living in this arrangement. During this time, the husband was prohibited from accessing her personal property and from visiting her during the course of the divorce proceedings. Although the déposito helped women to escape abuse at the hands of their partners, the system served to physically contain the women who were seeking to escape from their husbands. During this time, the woman would remain under close surveillance in order to protect her husband’s honor until his wife was returned to him. Accordingly, the women were not allowed to venture outside unaccompanied, to engage in any economic activities, or to have any social interactions. Husbands retained the right to challenge these déposito placements if they thought that their wives were being treated too leniently and being allowed too much freedom; their objections were often upheld by the church.

Women who were unable to secure an acceptable déposito were confined instead in the local asylum for the mentally ill or the prison for sexually wayward women.
Women of the working class who secured a suitable déposito faced an even more onerous burden: they were required to work for the families who provided this déposito and, in addition, pay a monthly support fee to them.

Efforts to Americanize the island and its populace after the U.S. invasion pervaded all aspects of life, including the organization of family relationships. The colonial attorney general for Puerto Rico, A.C. Sharpe, stated in 1899:

Family life is the recognized basis of true civilization. American law and institutions regard the relation of the husband and wife as one of the most sacred guaranties for the perpetuity of the state. Marriage is recognized as the only lawful relation by which Providence has permitted the continuance of the human race, and the history of mankind has proved it to be one of the chief foundations of social order (Hunt, 1903: 54).

Accordingly, a series of legal reforms was instituted to encourage legal marriage. These included the legalization of civil marriages, a prohibition against the charging of fees by civil judges to officiate at marriages, and the legalization of divorce. The legislation permitting civil marriage would “accomplish a great moral reform on the island,” while the legalization of divorce would make marriage more attractive because it would enable individuals to leave a relationship that had gone awry. These efforts to legalize divorce were supported by many members of Puerto Rico’s political parties. The legalization of divorce became, in fact, one of the reforms that distinguished the American epoch from that of the Spaniards (Suarez Findlay, 1999).

Despite the legalization of divorce, the newly reformed legal structure continued to maintain various provisions that won the support of more conservative Puerto Rican politicians. The reforms would permit wives to represent themselves and their property in court and to exercise their professions. However, only their husbands could legally represent the “conjugal unit” and administer marital property. The new law required that
a wife “obey her husband and follow him to where he elects to reside” and, in situations of disagreement between the husband and the wife, the law mandated that “the decision of the husband shall prevail in all cases relating to family affairs” (Revised Statutes and Code of Porto Rico, 1902).

The numbers of divorce petitions increased exponentially, so that by 1911, one-fifth of all civil cases filed in the Puerto Rican courts were divorce petitions. Many of these 20th century divorce petitions that were filed by women were premised on the failure of the husband to provide for his family economically, but 30 percent of them described extensive beatings and were premised on abuse. Women who demanded additional authority and freedom within the family in exchange for their own economic contribution were often confronted with physical discipline from their husbands (Suarez Findlay, 1999). A reporter for La Democracia (1902: 4) advocated in a column entitled “Felicidad conyugal” [“Marital Happiness”] that a husband exercise absolute authority over the wife, advising that a

wife should never allow [her husband] to treat her other than as a child...she should never openly challenge her husband’s ideas. Above all, she should prevent herself from causing the marital scenes that are always avoidable.

Although women were granted the right to vote in Puerto Rico in 1936, they remained inferior to men within the legal system. And, despite the recognition within Puerto Rico’s constitution of equality for men and women, it was clearly the expression of an aspiration, rather than one of reality (Ortega-Velez, 1998). Law Number 57 of May 30, 1973 and the Law of May 30, 1979 expressly recognized in their preface that “La imagen de dependencia casi total de la mujer respecto al hombre está firmemente atrincherada en nuestro sistema legal y en las actitudes de nuestra gente, lo que
menoscaba los derechos económicas y políticos de la mujer” [The image of almost total dependency of the woman relative to the man is firmly established in our legal system and in the attitudes of our people, such that the economic and political rights of women are diminished] (Ortega-Velez, 1998).

In 1972, the Commission on Civil Rights [Comisión de Derechos Civiles] published a study focusing on the rights and opportunities available to Puerto Rican women. The study concluded that discrimination against women continued to exist within the home and in society in general. Ultimately, the findings of the Commission and additional study resulted in the adoption of Law Number 54 of August 15, 1989, Ley para la Prevención e Intervención con la Violencia Doméstica [Law to Prevent and to Intervene with Domestic Violence]. Ortega-Velez (1998) has asserted that, despite the adoption of this law, recent reviews of Puerto Rico’s legal response to partner violence have found that:

- the judicial system minimizes and trivializes domestic violence
- the judicial system continues to resist the idea that domestic violence constitutes criminal behavior
- many attorneys and judges hold negative attitudes towards the law and its provisions
- many judges refuse to believe the accounts of abused women
- the judicial system continues to blame the women who are abused for their situations, essentially finding that they must have provoked the violent response
- the legal system has little understanding of the dynamics of partner violence
- the legal system lacks mechanisms to assist victims of domestic violence
• the legal system emphasizes the need to reconcile, stressing the salvation of the marriage
• few counseling programs exist for those convicted under the law, making it difficult for judges to require the treatment that is imposed by the law
• judges often refuse to provide the remedies available under the law, such as protection orders
• judges often require expert evidence of psychological trauma, despite the fact that the law specifically does not require such evidence
• judges often refuse to consider past assaultive behavior in deciding whether or not to issue a protective order and ill review only the current assault
• the tribunals often intimidate victims of domestic violence
• male victims of violence are often subjected to jokes about their masculinity and orders of protection for men are often denied
• judges refuse to apply the provisions of the law to individuals in gay and lesbian relationships (Ortega-Velez, 1998).

SUMMARY

The inhabitants of Puerto Rico have a long history of oppression and colonization, first by Spain and subsequently by the United States. The systems that were developed by these occupying nations differed significantly from those that had existed among the native Taino peoples. Notably, the imposed legal and economic systems brought about a decrease in individual independence, the subordination of women to men, economic
dependence on the occupying nation, internal migration, emigration to other nations, and widespread unemployment and poverty.

Violence against women in Puerto Rico has been called "one of the most serious problems confronting Puerto Rican families and societies." Partner violence in Puerto Rico has been noted in ethnographic studies and within the legal context. Contributing factors include poverty, bias inherent in the legal system, and values that subordinate women's wishes to those of their male partners and the needs of their family members.

Various researchers in the United States have concluded that wife assault appears to be more common among Puerto Ricans and more often tolerated among Puerto Ricans as compared with other Hispanic/Latino subgroups. Various contributing factors are similar to those experienced by island Puerto Ricans, including high rates of poverty and unemployment and, at least according to some studies, values that similarly subordinate women. Additional factors merit consideration in relation to partner violence on the mainland, including added stresses due to language barriers and discrimination and environmental violence directed against Puerto Ricans. In contrast to Puerto Rico, more stringent legal sanctions exist on the mainland to deter recurrences of partner violence.

Many of the factors that appear to contribute to partner violence among Puerto Ricans on both the mainland and in Puerto Rico are also common to non-Hispanic whites. These include, for instance, poverty and unemployment; the existence of a legal system that has for long periods of time tolerated, if not condoned, violence by men against their intimate partners; and cultural values that appear to subordinate the needs or desires of women to those of their male intimates. However, unlike many, though not all, non-Hispanic whites, Puerto Ricans have a history of oppression: first, as a colony of
Spain and later, as the subject of dependency on the United States. In addition, Puerto Ricans who migrated to the mainland have often been subjected to discrimination on both an individual and systemic basis due to their origin and ethnicity and have faced additional barriers due to language and educational differences. These factors serve to distinguish the situation of many Puerto Ricans from that of many non-Hispanic whites.

Various theories could help to explain how the seemingly higher rates of cultural approval of wife assault could result from this historical legacy and the socioeconomic conditions of Puerto Ricans in the United States. The Spanish conquest of Puerto Rico brought with it both a legal system and a religion (Catholicism) that established the male as the authority in both the public and private spheres of life. Accordingly, a cultural basis for male domination was established. At an individual level, men may have experienced increasing levels of frustration due to the tension between the cultural mandate to support their families and to treat superiors with respect, and their ever-decreasing economic mobility and opportunity. Particularly during the early and mid-20th century, Puerto Rican women’s visibility in the workforce increased, while at the same time men found their opportunities decreasing. Decreasing revenue for the family may have increased familial stress at the same time that men experienced increased personal stress due to their perceived inability to fulfill their roles as providers and, in other words, to fulfill what they perceived their roles as men. Both the ecological theory, with its emphasis on the occurrence of factors at multiple levels, and the gender strain theory, emphasizing the societally-imposed roles of men and the difficulties and frustrations associated with attempts at its fulfillment, provide a theoretical framework to explain how such circumstances may be related to partner violence.
How a society or culture chooses to respond to incidents that may be characterized as partner violence is intimately connected with the perceived cause of these behaviors. For instance, societies that view partner violence as a problem between individuals or within families may provide little affirmative, systemic support to those who are assaulted or those who assault and may characterize violence between intimates as a “family problem.” Societies that view partner violence as having, at least to some extent, its roots in the relevant culture may develop systemic approaches to address its occurrence, such as reformation various components of its legal system and attempts to prevent partner violence through public health intervention efforts. Ultimately, the options available to individuals are dependent to a large degree on the options that may be available to them within the larger societal context. Accordingly, responses to partner violence reflect the same themes as theories relating to causation. And, as an example, leaving an abusive relationship may not be perceived as an option, or at least a realistic one, if the larger society conceives of partner violence as a family-based problem, there are no shelters or other formal supports, and families are unwilling or unable to provide shelter to their victimized relatives.

Chapters 1 and 6 briefly reviewed some of the modifications that have been made to the legal systems of both mainland United States and Puerto Rico in response to partner violence. Chapter 7 focuses specifically on responses to partner violence at the individual and systemic levels.
CHAPTER SEVEN
RESPONSES TO PARTNER VIOLENCE

SYSTEMIC/CULTURAL RESPONSES

Overview

Whether a culture or society views partner violence as deviant is intimately related to societal proscriptions for each partner in the relationship. For instance, the assaultive partner may be characterized as the deviant actor, thereby provoking any one of a panoply of responses from the larger society and/or the injured partner. Conversely, if the assaulted partner is perceived as the deviant, an entirely different array of societal-and cultural-level responses may exist. Becker (1963: 9) has explained:

Social groups create deviance by making the rules whose infraction constitutes deviance, and by applying those rules to particular people and labeling them as “outsiders.” From this point of view, deviance is not a quality of the act the person commits, but rather a consequence of the application by others of rules and sanctions to an offender. The deviant is one to whom that label has successfully been applied; deviant behavior is that people so label.

Kitsuse (1962) expounded, maintaining that deviance is created through a three-stage process: the interpretation of behavior as deviant, the definition of individuals committing a behavior as deviant, and response to an individual in manner considered appropriate to the deviance. According to this formulation, an individual is not considered deviant until the third stage.

Temporality is critical in the perception or characterization of a behavior as deviant. Factors to be considered include timing, frequency, duration, tempo, rhythm of
occurrence, sequencing within context of other acts, and chronicity of the violence (Reese and Katovich 1989).

Within a larger cultural framework, responses to the characterization of the commission of partner violence as deviant may include social reaction, deterrence, prevention, incentives, and mandated treatment (Gove, 1982). These reactions are often reflected in the legal system that attends, or does not attend, to partner violence and in the response of health care professions to those who have been assaulted. The previous discussion of dowry and sati illustrates several of these responses and their reflection within the legal system. Sati also demonstrates how a society’s response to a particular practice may change over time, while the behavioral response of a particular subculture remains essentially static, even while the underlying motivation for that behavior may change.

At one time neither the practice of dowry nor that of sati was illegal under the law of India. Presumably, this tolerance of the practice reflected attitudes towards the economic value—or lack of value—of women and the role of women vis-á-vis men in Indian society. Both practices became illegal as the views of larger Indian society changed in response to both internal pressure from women’s rights groups and external pressures from human rights organizations. Laws were adopted as a mechanism of prevention; the enforcement of such laws would constitute a deterrence to those who might be considering the performance of these practices. Even still, dowry remains an acceptable practice to what is apparently a large subcomponent of the culture, if the related economic expenditures are any indication of the extent to which the practice
remains. And, where law prohibits behavior that is so widely practiced, one must question whether, indeed, it is viewed as deviant even by the larger society.

**Societal-Level Responses in the U.S.**

Although this discussion emphasizes responses to male-inflicted violence on female intimates, much of what is presented is also applicable to situations involving female-inflicted violence on male intimates. It is less clear, due to our limited knowledge at this point in time, whether the range of responses presented is relevant to situations involving same-sex violence.

An examination of systemic responses to partner violence in the U.S. similarly demonstrates how the larger societal response has shifted. For much of our history, the assaulted individual was perceived as the deviant party, as reflected in his or her treatment by various systems confronted by partner violence. As indicated in chapter 1, "chastisement" of one's wife was legally permissible during the colonial era and was acceptable as a means of maintaining the order within a man's household. It appears that few mechanisms existed to deter or to prevent partner violence apart from the social influence of the Puritans, who perceived marital violence as a threat to stability. And, although laws prohibiting wife abuse were adopted in some communities, they were rarely enforced. The failure of these laws to deter marital violence may be attributable to the failure to enforce the laws.

In more recent times, a similar social reaction was reflected by the failure of the police to arrest the apparent assailant, by the refusal of police to enforce legal restraining orders, and by the failure of the courts to issue such orders. In fact, the woman's
behavior, such as nagging, yelling, or arguing, was not infrequently viewed as responsible for the violence (Pence, 1983). The case of Jean Balistreri aptly illustrates the typical law enforcement response.

Balistreri had called the police following a severe beating that had been inflicted by her husband (Balistreri v. Pacifica Police Department, 1990). Although she had sustained injuries to her nose, mouth, eyes, teeth, and abdomen, the police did not offer her any medical assistance, refused to arrest her husband, and convinced her not to file a report. She obtained a restraining order against her former husband in an attempt to halt the continuing harassment. Her ex-husband violated the restraining order by making harassing phone calls and by driving his car into her garage. The police refused to investigate or arrest him, and denied the existence of the restraining order. Balistreri’s ex-husband tossed a firebomb into her home, which caused severe fire damage. The police took 45 minutes to respond to the emergency call.

A similar societal reaction was reflected in the attitudes of prosecutors, who often perceived domestic violence cases and family matters that did not belong in the courts (Welch, 1994). As a result, prosecution rates of domestic violence cases were low and dismissal rates were quite high. Legislators were similarly dismissive of the difficulties faced by assaulted partners, refusing to expand legislative protections that would enable police and prosecutors to act. For instance, many state laws did not—and still do not—provide for civil protection orders for a woman who is pregnant with the batterer’s child but does not yet have a live-born child with the abuser (Gina C. v. Stephen F., 1991; Woodin v. Rasmussen, 1990), to a woman who is dating but not cohabiting with the abuser (Klein and Orloff, 1993), or to a same-sex partner (Heer, Grogan, Clark, &
Carson, 1998). Prior to 1994, our federal laws failed to recognize the particular plight of foreign-born individuals entrapped in abusive relationships with United States citizens who were unable to leave due to their legal status (Loue, 2001).

Even health care professionals reflected a similar reaction to those who had been abused. In fact, health care providers have been found to be the least helpful of all professionals in assisting individuals who have been battered. This has been attributed, in part, to an inability to recognize the symptoms of partner violence (Chambliss et al., 1995; Reynolds, 1993) and, to some degree, to a belief that the battering victim is responsible for his or her own situation (Stark, Flitcraft, and Frazier, 1979).

The widespread occurrence of such responses from systemic institutions which, until recent times, were dominated and orchestrated by men, appears to lend significant support to patriarchy theory. The cogency of that theory is further strengthened by the apparent devaluation of women economically and socially. Although one might argue that these responses also lend credence to the culture of violence theory, that assertion is refuted by the fact that cases involving assaults by strangers resulted in arrest and prosecution at significantly higher rates than those involving intimate partners (Thurman v. City of Torrington, 1984). Violence was accepted and tolerated, but only within specified limits.

These circumstances also provide support for both the exchange theory and general systems theory. As indicated, exchange theory asserts that "People hit and abuse other family members because they can" (Gelles, 1983: 157). In calculating a cost-benefit analysis, the absence of social censure and legal repercussions significantly reduces any potential cost associated with the behavior. The feedback system visualized
by the general systems theory, it may be remembered, operates at the societal level, as well as the family and individual levels. At the societal level, partner violence may reflect high levels of violence in society in general, cultural norms legitimizing violence, and the sexist organization of society. The circumstances described here, taken together with the previously described devaluation of women in the workforce, the identification of masculinity with violence, and gender-based roles of men and women reflect how, on a systemic level, positive feedback exists to reinforce the occurrence of partner violence.

If, indeed, the cause, or partial cause, of partner violence occurs at the societal level, as these theories allege and these circumstances appear to indicate, then if change is to be effectuated, it must also occur at a societal level. As a result of legal battles, research findings (see chapter 1), and activism by women who had been assaulted by their partners (see below), the social reaction to partner violence as reflected in our various systems has gradually shifted so as to more frequently view the assailant, rather than the assaulted individual, as the dominant actor. Concomitant with this shift, measures have been developed and adopted to deter and to prevent partner violence. These include, depending upon the specific jurisdiction, increased rates of assailant arrest and prosecution, the adoption of mandatory arrest policies, the mandated treatment of those accused of battering, and the improved training of medical personnel (Loue, 2001). Mandatory arrest policies, in particular, have been credited with serving to proclaim the victim's right to be free of violence and to deny the batterer support in trivializing his actions (Saccuzzo, 1999).
PSYCHOSOCIAL/INDIVIDUAL RESPONSES

The Assaultive Partner

The Account

At the individual level, the assaultive partner may respond to an incident by attempting to ameliorate the circumstances or effectuate a cure, by offering an account, or by retaliating.

The individual responsible for having committed the violence and the individual who suffered the violence may or may not perceive that the behavior constituted violence and, even if it did, that it was inappropriate. Whether or not the assailant or the assaulted views the conduct as wrongful, and whether there are any adverse consequences to the conduct, may depend to a large degree on how the behavior is viewed by the larger society. The psychosocial factors that give rise to partner violence do not stand alone, but rather occur in a larger context that responds in some way to the incident; that larger response may be at least partially determinative of whether such incidents will recur and future individual-level responses. An account will only be necessary if the assault is not accepted in the larger culture as routine behavior:

[A]n account [is] a statement made by a social actor to explain unanticipated or untoward behavior—whether that behavior is his own or that of others, and whether the proximate cause for that statement arises from the actor himself or from someone else. An account is not called for when people engage in routine, commonsense behavior in a cultural environment that recognizes behavior as such (Scott and Lyman, 1968: 46).

The account may be offered at various points in time: to the partner at the time of occurrence, to the law enforcement officer who is called to the scene, to the defense attorney, and to the judge and/or jury. The account may consist of such mechanisms as
outright denial of the behavior, or consist of an excuse that attempts to justify it. Sykes and Matza (1957), in their work with deviant behavior, have referred to such denials of responsibility as a “technique of neutralization.” These accounts may be used in an attempt to excuse or justify the conduct to the batterer him- or herself, to the victim of the assault, or to others, and/or to mitigate the consequences of the battering behavior.

Hearn (1996) has identified 9 types of accounts that male assaultive partners offer in response to an incident of battering: (1) denial, (2) forgetting, blanking out, and not knowing, (3) exclusion and inclusion, (4) minimization, (5) removal of the self and of intention, (6) excuses, (7) justifications, (8) confessions, and (9) combinations of talk. Denial is the most basic technique of neutralization; the batterer may deny that the incident ever happened, or that a portion of it never happened.

The following responses are characteristic of denial:

- I didn’t do it.
- I never touched her.
- I don’t remember the incidents/It was so long ago.
- I was out of control./I was just seeing red./I didn’t know what I was doing.
- I was drunk./I was high.
- I was in a blackout.
- I was in a “dry-drunk” blackout.
- I’m sober now so my anger isn’t a problem for me anymore.
- I don’t get angry anymore.
- Our real problem is that we just can’t communicate.
- I don’t have an anger and abuse problem.
- I’m not abusive.
- I’m not controlling (Decker, 1999: 23-24).

The technique of exclusion and inclusion refers to the batterer’s definition of violence and what is excluded from coverage, thereby eliminating the battering incident. For instance, if physical violence is defined as more than a push, then holding, restraining, and pushing are not identified as acts of violence; the violent incident then
never occurred. If physical violence did not cause visible injury, then it did not happen. If the violence was sexual, it was not violence, it was sex.

The mechanism of minimization similarly accomplishes the exclusion of certain acts from the category of violence. For instance, it was “only” a push; he “just” held her for a small moment. Other examples of minimization include the following:

- I only hit her once.
- I didn’t really hurt her./She bruises easily.
- It’s not that big a deal.
- I’m not nearly as bad as my dad was.
- This is nothing compared to what my friends do to their wives.
- I didn’t hit her very hard.
- She’s a big/strong woman. (i.e. “She can take it”)
- I “kind of” pushed her.
- I just gave her a “little” shove.
- She “fell down” after I pushed her.
- She exaggerates.
- The police just overreacted.
- It didn’t really happen that way (Decker, 1999: 24).

Removal of the self and of intention refers to such phrases as “I am not a violent person,” essentially denying the possibility that a violent act could have occurred. The assaultive partner may also explain that the injury resulted from the female partner’s own actions: “I didn’t intend to hurt her. If she hadn’t moved in that direction, my hand wouldn’t have made contact with her face.”

Excuses attempt to place the blame for the action on others or on outside forces and may consist of appeals to accidents, to defeasibility, to biological drives, and to scapegoating. Excuses serve to relieve the actor from responsibility. Excuses most frequently include the batterer’s past, such as his mother or school; substances that affected him, such as drugs or alcohol; the behavior of the woman that made it impossible for him to avoid the action, such as nagging; and forces within the man that made him
uncontrollable, such as a mental illness (Hearn, 1996). Andres English-Howard, convicted of the murder of his wife, recounted the events leading to his wife’s killing:

She was my, it got to the point where, where she was my...conscience....And Andrea knew what to say to, um, to make me react...

I went in, I went into her room and, wanted to shut her, I wanted to shut her up...And she kept saying the one thing she could say to me that, um, that really made a difference was telling me to take responsibility for, take responsibility for my, my actions....

So the next thing I, I knew, I found, I, I, I was on her. Like, like, like I grabbed her...I, I grabbed her neck...I wanted her to, I wanted her to shut up...She, um, she said, um, I, I grabbed her neck....I, I just grabbed her...Started to choke her...It shut her up. She was like my, my, my, she had become my conscience....

And I grabbed her to shut her up. And she told me I was hurting her and I, it, it, did, I hear that. I mean, it didn’t, it didn’t mean anything....(Quoted in Jones, 2000: 120)

The killing, he explained, was the result of a cocaine-instilled delirium and the entreaties of his wife.

Several situations illustrate how an excuse may operate to relieve individuals of responsibility in such circumstances. One study of police officers’ attitudes found that the officers were less willing and less likely to arrest an assailant if he explained his violent behavior as a response to the sexual partner’s lack of fidelity (Saunders, 1995). In Brazil, a defendant in the murder of his wife was acquitted when he argued that the killing constituted a legitimate defense of his honor because his wife had committed adultery. Brazil’s highest court reversed the decision, holding that the killing was not a defense of honor, but rather of “self-esteem, vanity, and the pride of the Lord who sees his wife as property.” Nevertheless, on remand, the lower court again acquitted the husband on the grounds that he was forced to defend his honor (Americas Watch, 1991: 18-19). These examples illustrate the complex interaction between psychosocial
mechanisms and larger cultural and societal factors that may influence the recurrence, and perhaps the initial occurrence, of specific behaviors.

Justifications do not deny responsibility for the action, but they essentially argue that the battering act was necessary as a response to something. A successful justification serves to neutralize the conduct and/or its consequences while asserting the positive value of the behavior. Justifications often take the form of denial of the injury and/or the victim, of condemnation of the condemners, and/or of an appeal to loyalty. Common justifications include the female partner’s infidelity; the female partner’s lack of attention to her responsibilities, such as housework; and the failure of the female partner to restrict her movements and her autonomy in accordance with the batterer’s dictates. The following excerpts illustrate situations involving justification:

With my wife—she gets on me about moving the furniture, that I’m not doing it right: “You always do this, you never do that, you never think about anyone else, you’re only thinking about yourself....” The leg of the sofa breaks, now I’m the dummy who did it. She runs me down about money....”(Wexler, 2000: 12)

There were times I would goad her by getting in her face, calling her particular names so she would strike first. When she did, it would give me the green light to knock the hell out of her. After all, she hit me first. I was never afraid of her. Sometimes I would laugh at her after she hit me. (Andy, quoted in Paymar, 2000: 11)

Confessions involve the acceptance of responsibility for the violence, but are often accompanied by a “naïve” explanation, such as “I beat her because I loved her so much.” Combinations of talk refers to the use of multiple mechanisms to account for the violence. Reliance on multiple techniques is not uncommon among men who have a long career of violence (Hearn, 1996).
As Downs (1996) has noted, one's response to a batterer's account is intimately linked to one's normative assumptions and to the narrative itself. Bennet and Feldman (1969: 6, 10, 32) observed the critical function that the narrative plays in determining the outcome to and for the batterer in the context of the criminal justice system:

Perhaps the most significant application of the storytelling perspective involves clarifying the nature of bias in the justice process. Stories are symbolic reconstructions of events and actions. People who cannot manipulate symbols within a narrative form may be at a disadvantage even when, as witnesses or defendants, they are telling the truth....

The inadequate development of setting, character, means, or motive can, as any literature student knows, render a story's action ambiguous. In a novel or film, such ambiguity may be an aesthetic flaw. In a trial, it is grounds for reasonable doubt.

A number of studies lend support to the above observation. Shields and Hannecke (1983) found in their study of male spouse assailants that 68% of the assailants attributed their behavior to external causes or to alcohol. Dutton (1985) found in a study of 75 men who battered that 21% proffered excuses to explain their behavior. Several other researchers have found in their studies of men in treatment that several "techniques of neutralization" are common, including the minimization of the assault and its consequences, the attribution of blame to the victim, or the definition of the assaultive behavior as consistent with cultural norms (Sonkin, Martin, and Walker, 1985).

It has been hypothesized that a synergistic relationship exists between the willingness of the larger society to accept such accounts and the attribution of blame for the assaultive behavior to external causes (Collins, 1983). There is some empirical evidence to support this hypothesis. Saunders (1995) found in his study of 111 police officers' attitudes towards intimate partner violence that the officers' willingness to arrest assailants was related to the assailants' proffered justification for the assault. For
instance, where assailants explained their behavior as a response to their partners’ lack of sexual fidelity, the officer were much less likely to arrest the assailant. This intricate synergy between individual-level behavior and the response of those representing the larger societal institutions appears to lend credence to culturally-oriented causational theories and to general system theory, which stress the interplay between individual conduct and societal or cultural factors.

And, when the legal consequences fail to respond to the proffered account, others may bolster the account, hoping still to modify the response. A recent incident in Ohio provides an example. A Yemen-born man was convicted of and sentenced to a one year period of probation following his guilty plea to a charge of domestic violence, resulting from having hit his wife in the face. As a result of that conviction, he became subject to deportation from the United States because U.S. immigration law specifies that an immigrant can be deported if convicted of a crime that carries a sentence of one or more years in jail. The immigrant’s wife had not pressed charges against her husband, but the Akron Police Department had (Sangiacomo, 1999). His lawyer, in commenting on the conviction, implicitly minimized violence against women in stating, “All it takes to make an immigrant deported is for an angry wife or girlfriend to file a police report for abuse. If he’s convicted, he’s gone.”

Batterers may retaliate against their victims for having reported the battering incident to the police, for having sought a restraining order, or for attempting to leave the relationship (Felder and Victor, 1996). Felder and Victor maintain that one of the most effective ways to prevent such retaliation is to institute mandatory prosecution which, they assert, eliminates or reduces the woman’s danger because it is the state that is
asserting power over the batterer, not the woman who is “usurping” the batterer’s power by seeking to press charges.

Treatment

Treatment programs for men who batter women are relatively new. As recently as 1982, there were only 40 programs and services in the United States that were devoted specifically to men who batter women. Most of those utilizing such services were there through self-referral (Star, 1982). By 1985, the number of such programs has increased to 90 (Pirog-Good and Stets-Kealey, 1985). It is now estimated that there may be hundreds of such programs nationally.

It is not unusual, however, for a violent partner to participate in treatment or rehabilitation as a condition of a court order, rather than on his or her own initiative (personal communication, Cuyahoga County Task Force on Domestic Violence). Dutton and Golant (1995: 13) have described the reaction of many men upon first entering into such a treatment program:

The men who were referred to our treatment groups usually had never been in psychotherapy before and had thought it was for “sissies.” Sent by the courts, they would rage and cry in their opening-night anxiety, some storming out, others attacking the justice system or their wives’ actions that “caused” their violence. Others broke into tears of self-recrimination and remorse.

The outrage expressed by the abuser at the state involvement in his life may be even more extreme in instances in which the abuser is affluent and “well-connected” (Felder and Victor, 1996).

Treatment is rendered even more difficult by various cultural and social structural features that condone or minimize the battering of women. Tifft (1993) has noted the
sex- and gender-based hierarchy that exists within our culture, our cultural support of patriarchal arrangements within families, and the reinforcement of hierarchical structure throughout our society, such as places of employment, which then defines expectations, behaviors, and relationships. Language is used to objectify and denigrate women through the use of such terms as "bitch" and "cow" to describe women; the use of words such as "pussy-whipped" to describe and derogate men who show concern for their partners' feelings; and the use of expressions, such as "piece of ass," to characterize women as mere body parts.

It is beyond the scope of this research to review the various modalities of treatment and counseling that may be available to batterers, whether voluntary or not. It is sufficient to note that a significant body of literature has been developed which addresses the potential usefulness of such approaches as direct confrontation (Adams, 1989; Tiftt, 1993), training in the development of communication skills and the enhancement of self-esteem (Felder and Victor, 1996; Sonkin et al., 1985), cognitive restructuring (Adams, 1996; Bolton and Bolton, 1987; Edleson, 1984; Ellis, 1976), anger control therapy (Dutton, 1995), and couple therapy (Dutton, 1995; Pagelow, 1984); the difficulties and/or dangers inherent in a number of these strategies (Felder and Victor, 1996; Gondolf and Russell, 1986; Paymar, 2000); and the degree of their efficacy, effectiveness, and/or accessibility (Deschner, 1984; Maiuro, Cahn, Vitaliano et al., 1986; Williams and Becker, 1994).
The Assaulted Partner

Counts (1992) has identified six different strategies available to beaten women. Although these are based on her observations of wife-beating in Papua New Guinea, many are applicable in concept across many societies. Potential responses include: (1) leaving her husband and taking a lover or second husband [departure]; (2) taking the dispute to the public arena and charging her husband before the village or provincial court authorities [help-seeking]; (3) leaving her husband and returning to her own kin if her relatives do not intervene on her behalf [departure and help-seeking]; (4) exposing her husband to menstrual blood to cause his illness [retribution]; (5) committing suicide; and (6) fighting back [violence]. Additional approaches include isolation and social organization. Lateef (1992), based on her study of Indo-Fijian women, has identified yet another alternative strategy: acceptance or remaining with the batterer.

Departure

Leaving is often a process, rather than an event, and frequently involves movement into and out of the abusive relationship (Limandri, 1987). A battered woman may leave her battering partner several times before she is able to leave permanently; it has been found that the average battered woman leaves her partner eight times before she leaves permanently (Felder and Victor, 1996). Schwartz (2000: 99) has described this process through the use of an allegory:

There is a story about a snake, which serves as a metaphor for needing help and seeking therapy. Before therapy, you are walking down a road. You see a snake lying in the road and pick it up and begin to play with it, but being a snake, it bites you.
During therapy, you are walking down this same road and see the snake again. You kick it with your shoe and sort of play with it, but you don’t pick it up. You’ve learned through experience that it will bite you.

At the end of therapy, you are once again walking down this same road and, as before, you see the same snake. This time, you cross to the other side of the road, avoiding it.

Women have described changes in themselves that have allowed them to ultimately leave their abusive partner: redefinition of abuse as they become angrier about their victimization (Ferraro and Johnson, 1983) and passage through a variety of phases of response to the abuse, including binding, enduring, disengaging, and recovering (Landenburger, 1989). Weldon (1999: 15), who suffered severe physical abuse from her ex-husband for many years, has described how she came to leave that abusive relationship:

But there comes a time to stop pretending.
The soul, I have learned, has its own agenda and knows the truth even if you dare not acknowledge it. When the slaps, bites, and punches are long since anesthetized in afterthought, there comes a moment when, of its own volition, your soul says, “No more.” You may not even hear it shout, or simply nod to its defiance, but it is there. And from that voice comes the solution and the strength, the voice no longer mute, the voice so clear it is deafening in its resolution.

There is a last time. And though it begins the same, the end is different.

Numerous factors have been found conducive to leaving an abusive relationship, including the availability of economic support (Strube and Barbour, 1984; Pfouts, 1978), the availability of support services (Snyder and Scheer, 1981), previous separations (Snyder and Scheer, 1981), and concerns for one’s own safety and personal growth (Ulrich, 1991). Various other circumstances have been found to constitute additional barriers to leaving, including potential economic hardship (Gondolf et al., 1988), religious traditions (Ulrich, 1993), and love (Strube and Barbour, 1984).
Draper (1992), in her discussion of the responses of four !Kung women to battering by their husbands, noted that a decision to leave is frequently dependent on whether one has somewhere to go. In two of the four instances of battering described, the beating occurred away from kin. The wives had no adult children to whom they could flee and their parents were relatively poor. In contrast, the other two wives came from relatively wealthy families who could both intercede on their behalf and provide them with living accommodations.

Kerns (1992) found in her fieldwork in a Garifuna community in Belize that wife beating is quite rare because a woman who is beaten often has the means to leave and no compelling reason to stay. Unlike women in the United States, who often face numerous barriers to leaving, such as economic dependence, the absence of effective intervention or any intervention, social isolation, the lack of a reliable and accessible sanctuary, an ineffective criminal justice system, and an unsympathetic legal system, women in the Garifuna community are rarely dependent economically, can usually seek sanctuary with their families, and can generally rely on prompt and effective intervention by family members, who have the right and the duty to intervene.

NiCarthy (1997) has proposed that women contemplating departure from an abusive relationship utilize a series of questions to assist in deciding and in preparing for the future. These self-questions include recognition of one’s worst fears resulting from leaving, recognition of one’s worst fears as a result of staying, comparing the dangers resulting from each course of action, and balancing the recognized advantages and disadvantages of each path. She further recommends the development of a plan of action in either case.
Help-Seeking

Women who have been the victims of intimate partner violence may seek help in a variety of arenas, some of them formal and some informal. Unfortunately, little research has examined either factors related to a decision to seek help or patterns of help-seeking among physically abused women. A number of factors have been found to increase the likelihood that a battered woman will seek help: the severity and frequency of injury (Abel and Suh, 1987; Dobash and Dobash, 1979; Gelles, 1977) a higher educational level of the battered woman (Abel and Suh, 1987), younger age of the victim (West, Kantor, and Jasinski, 1998), and a greater ability of the victim to use English (West, Kantor, and Jasinski, 1998).

Schwartz (2000: 196) has observed both the internal dynamics that may impede a woman’s search for help and the consequences that may arise as a result:

Men can lash out, hit, swear, or kick the dog. Women internalize. Rather than try to punish our abuser, we punish ourselves. We might drink to the point of becoming an alcoholic, take drugs to numb our pain and sorrow, become promiscuous and sleep with any man who will have us, or end our life—simply because we didn’t reach out and seek help. (Emphasis added.)

Sorenson and Telles (1991) found that women’s immigration status and minimal knowledge of English may be barriers to help seeking. Women may refrain from reporting instances of partner violence, fearing that they will be reported to the INS and deported from the United States. Sorenson (1996) has documented some of the difficulties that immigrant women reported during focus groups relating to violence:

I couldn’t find a shelter and I did something which is taboo—I brought her [a battered woman] to my house...this man [the woman’s husband] pulled a gun on both of us when I took her from the house with the children. We ran to my van [then] went to my house....A month later she was back with this man....Her fear was that she could not financially cope on her own. She was an immigrant woman [from Central America] who did not have
her papers so she felt a fear that the authorities would pick her up and send her back...to her that was much worse than staying with a man that occasionally beats her. (Mexican American woman, quoted in Sorenson, 1996: 133)

The immigration experience itself may present a barrier to help-seeking. Le (1982) estimated that 40% of the female refugees traveling from Vietnam to other countries in 1980 had been raped by pirates at sea; 11% of these women were between the ages of 11 and 20. It has been hypothesized that women who survive such experiences may perceive dating violence as minimal in comparison and, consequently, may not report such violence (Kanuha, 1987).

Although women who have been the victims of such violence have been found to utilize a large proportion of medical care, through emergency department services, clinic services such as chronic pain clinics (Bergman, Brismar, and Nordin, 1992; Rath, Jarrett, and Leonardson, 1989; Haber, 1985), and mental health services (Carmen, Riecker, and Mill, 1984; Stark, Flitcraft, and Frazier, 1979), there are often barriers to the receipt of health services.

A survey of 1,000 battered women found that health care practitioners were the least helpful of all professional help sources contacted (Brendtro and Bowker, 1989). Rather than addressing the totality of the situation, health practitioners may be more inclined to address only the medical signs and symptoms that are detectable (Stark and Flitcraft, 1988). Women who may have initially sought out the services of a health practitioner may refrain from returning due to the provider’s negative or callous attitude (cf. Websdale, 1998). This characterization of physician response, however, is not surprising in view of the fact that few medical schools provide instruction relating to domestic violence (Holtz, Hames, and Safran, 1989). Receipt of health care may be even
more problematic for abused immigrants, who may refrain from seeking such services due to cultural beliefs (Capps, 1994; Frye and D’Avanzo, 1994; Uba, 1992; Moore and Boehnlein, 1991) and/or fear of being reported to the INS (Asch, Leake, and Gelberg, 1994).

Lesbians who have been battered by their lesbian partner may face difficulties at the hospital due to emergency room staff assumptions regarding her sexual orientation (Chrystos, 1996) and/or the potential consequences of disclosing her sexual orientation. As one researcher noted, it is not unusual for a lesbian victimized by her partner to ultimately decide against telling her full story. By coming out, a lesbian’s sexual preference may be included as part of her permanent medical record, subject to review by unknown future insurers, physicians, nurses, and technicians (Hammond, 1989).

Research indicates that the vast majority of women who suffer partner violence have never sought assistance from law enforcement. For instance, Roy (1977) found that approximately one-third of the women who called a domestic violence hotline had never called the police. Schulman (1981) found in a study of Kentucky women who were married to or living with a male partner that less than 10% of violent incidents between the partners had been reported to the police. Other studies have estimated that between 7% (Kantor and Straus, 1990) and half of all violent incidents (Bachman, 1994) are ever reported to the police.

Little empirical research has been conducted to explore the circumstances in which victims seek help from law enforcement and the legal system. Bachman and Coker (1995) found in their study of 1,535 female victims of intimate partner violence that victims were more likely to report a violent incident to the police if they were black, had sustained an injury as a result of the assault, and had not been victimized previously.
by the offender. (These same factors were also predictive of whether the police arrested the assailant.) Other research has indicated that women are more likely to seek police intervention if they have been abused for a longer period of time, have less education, are of lower occupational status, and are married to men with alcohol-related difficulties (Abel and Suh, 1987). The severity of the injury also appears to be related to the likelihood that the police will be called (Kantor and Straus, 1990). Hutchison and colleagues (1994) found in their study of 18,712 domestic violence calls for police services in a large southern metropolitan area, conducted over a 17-month period, that currently married and cohabiting (unmarried) couples were equally likely to rely on police services. Almost one quarter of the calls were attributable to incidents between divorced partners, ex-cohabitants, or dating but not cohabiting partners. Almost one half of the victims were between the ages of 26 and 35 and approximately 80% of the calls were from women.

Research has identified various explanations by assaulted partners for their decision not to call the police in response to a violent incident. A study of data from the National Crime Survey from 1978 through 1982 found that women often refrained from calling the police because they felt that the violence was a personal matter, while a smaller proportion feared that they would suffer retaliation from their intimate if they called (Langan and Innes, 1986). An interview-based study of 137 women recruited from a Midwestern shelter found that nearly all of the women who had not contacted the police had been prevented from doing so, e.g. the assailant physically prevented them from calling, there was no phone. Women who reported being physically prevented from calling the police were found to have suffered from more severe abuse than women who
gave other reasons for not seeking police assistance, such as thinking that the police would not help, fearing that they would suffer a reprisal if they called, and fear that the police would take away their children (Fleury, Sullivan, Bybee, and Davidson II, 1998). The fear of reprisal is not unfounded; one woman interviewed after the violent incident with her partner explained her subsequently inflicted injury: "Actually, I probably shouldn’t have called the police. My husband got real mad at me for doing it and gave me this shiner" (Walter, 1981: 259).

Victims of physical violence have also refrained from seeking help from the police because of disappointment with the police response to past incidents of violence (Lerman, 1992). A recent study which focused on the aftermath of calls by victims to the police found that 8 weeks following the arrest at the scene of 24 assaultive male partners, 8 had entered guilty pleas, 2 had had the charges dismissed, and 14 had been released and were awaiting disposition of the charges, including 7 who had not been required to post a bond. Eighteen of the 24 individuals (75%) has spent fewer than 18 hours in jail. Of the 8 individuals who entered a guilty plea to domestic assault, 2 were ordered to perform 3 days of community service, 4 were ordered to participate in an anger management program, and 1 was ordered to undergo treatment for substance abuse (Brookoff, O'Brien, Cook, Thompson, and Williams, 1997).

Adams (1993) has identified several barriers to seeking support from members of the clergy: the failure of clergy to address battering as a chronic problem, the minimization of the lethality of domestic and sexual violence, the acceptance by the clergy of inadequate counseling techniques as adequate, the redefinition of the batterer’s criminal conduct as a psychological problem, the failure to maintain the confidence of
the battered victim, identification of the male clergy figure with the male batterer, a willingness on the part of the clergy to believe the abuser's contriteness and a consequent emphasis on forgiveness as a remedy, and an overriding emphasis on the "covenant" of marriage. Paymar's account of the church-related experiences of a husband and wife during episodes of battering is instructive:

[Wife]: I believed Chuck had the authority in the household based on our religious orientation. It was in the Scriptures, or at least in the way they were interpreted. We went to church three days a week for eleven years. When members of the congregation would see me battered they would say, "What did you do to make him so mad that he would beat you like that?" We finally quit the church after Chuck was ordered into counseling for battering me.

[Husband]: I beat M'Liss up once and her face was all swollen, her arms were bruised, and her glasses were broken, yet we still went to church. The word got to the pastor that I had beat her up. The preacher called me to his back room and asked me if I'd beaten her. I said, "Yes, I did." And he said, "If that's what it takes to keep her in line, well—" and he pointed to the door and I left. Nothing else was said. Our church would not tell the congregation that domestic abuse was wrong (Paymar, 2000: 35-36). Despite such occurrences, some clergy urge that silence—the usual course of action among congregations in domestic violence situations—be broken. For instance, Fortune has cautioned clergy to consider how they portray the theme of forgiveness, to consider whether they have tacitly approved of domestic violence, and to avoid preaching about forgiveness in a way that equates forgiveness with "cheap grace" for perpetrators and reinforces shame and guilt among the victims and survivors of domestic violence (McClure and Ramsay, 1989: 3).

Suicide

Suicide is a not infrequent response to intimate partner violence. In South Africa, for instance, it has been estimated that violence occurs in 50 to 60% of all
marriages. Of the women in such relationships, approximately 25% attempt suicide (Adams and Hickson, 1993). Suicide has been recognized as a culturally acceptable means out for women in India who have reached the end of their endurance of physical and emotional abuse. It may, in fact, be the only viable alternative to eventual murder by the husband or his family (Prasad, 1994). Counts (1987) has argued that in some Oceanic societies, such as Papua New Guinea, female suicide is a culturally recognized behavior that permits the “politically powerless...to revenge themselves on those who have made their lives intolerable.” Mitchell (1992) found that Wape men in New Guinea may refrain from beating their wives because of the women’s threats to commit suicide if their husbands shame them. Forty-one percent of Fijian Indian families in one study identified marital violence as the cause of suicide (Haynes, 1984). In the United States, a study of 176 women who presented at a hospital emergency room following a suicide attempt found that 30% of the women had been battered and 22% had at least one documented incident of physical violence noted in their medical records (Stark and Flitcraft, 1998). Schwartz (2000: 60-61) described her own contemplation of suicide as her response to continuous battering. The suicide attempt, however, may ultimately lead in the United States to the woman’s loss of custody of her children should she ultimately divorce, as the result of a judicial finding that she is not fit to care for the children (Stark and Flitcraft, 1988).
Violence

The amputation of John Bobbitt’s penis by his wife Lorena has become infamous (Grindstaff and McCaughey, 1996). On June 23, 1993, Bobbitt returned home after a night out drinking with his friend. He woke his wife Lorena and raped her, and then fell asleep. She responded by cutting off his penis with a kitchen knife and throwing it into a nearby vacant lot. Police recovered the severed organ based on Lorena’s description of where she had thrown it, and surgeons re-attached it in a 9-hour operation. Lorena was ultimately acquitted of malicious wounding.

A number of studies have indicated that females murder male partners at a rate that is substantially less than murders of females by their male partners (Browne and Williams, 1989; Straus, 1986). It has been suggested that the vast majority of such murders result from self defense, retaliation, or desperation following years of physical abuse (Browne and Williams, 1989; Browne, 1987). Peggy Green, an inmate in Bedford Hills Prison in New York serving a sentence of 25 years to life for the murder of her intimate partner, explained how she finally decided to kill him:

I was not a silent victim, I was not passive, and I learned my strength and anger very young. But striking out did me no good; but then nothing else did either. I went for help and no one listened. When I was being beaten, I went to the police and they sent me back home and I was beaten more. When I told the foster care workers about the foster fathers who were molesting me and their wives who were beating me, they defended them. And when I tried to tell the psychiatrists, they analyzed and asked lots of questions, but did nothing about the situation (Quoted in Felder and Victor, 1996: 176).
Isolation

Not infrequently, women may self-isolate in an attempt to stop the violence. For instance, if her partner claims that he hit her because she came home late from work or school, she may cease those activities (Flitcraft, 1995).

Self-isolation may also stem from an attempt to hide the deviance—either that of the abusive partner for battering or the assaulted partner’s “deviance” for deserving such treatment and/or for not leaving. The abused partner may offer excuses as to why she is unable to participate in activities or socialize with others, in essence effectuating a “cover” for her situation in an attempt to “blend” (Edgerton, 1993; French et al., 1985; Goffman, 1961).

Many times, however, the seemingly self-imposed isolation may be due to coercion and fear. Goetting (1999: 130) described one such situation:

Lee existed in total captivity. Tony dead-bolted her in the house when he was away (sometimes without food because she was “fat”) and taped the edges of the door to alert him to tampering. Lee was instructed not to touch doors and windows. Tony sometimes took the phone with him. He would warn Lee that she could never escape, that he would find her and put her six feet under where she belonged. He was omnipresent. Even when he was gone for days, she was afraid to leave; she knew he would find her. She had no money or car and had alienated her friends and son. (Emphasis added.)

Common isolating behaviors of batterers include insistence on knowing who the partner spoke with and what she did; phoning the victim’s friends, family members, and co-workers, resulting in their isolation to avoid such situations; discouraging her from continuing in her education or employment; suddenly appearing at the individual’s place of work; acting jealous in public; undermining family social activities; causing fights before the battered partner would leave the house to discourage her from leaving;
disabling the car; disconnecting the telephone; and relocating to an isolated area (Paymar, 2000).

Social Organization

Various women’s movements have focused on violence against women. India’s women’s movement provides a good example of this. The women’s movement there has organized rallies, protests, and mass meetings in an attempt to focus public attention on the problem of intimate partner violence (Katzenstein, 1989). Although many of the participants may not themselves have been abused, many of them have. Various autonomous women’s organizations in India have staged street plays about dowry murders, rape, and other forms of domestic violence. Other organizations have provided legal help to women attempting to leave their abusive situations. Leaders within these movements have frequently used their connections to effectuate change, such as using governmental connections to arrange consultations regarding dowry violence.

A similar movement occurred in the United States during the 1970s. Feminist lawyers instituted numerous lawsuits against police departments for their refusal to arrest assaultive partners and against court personnel for denying battered women access to judges who could issue protective orders (Pleck, 1987). The National Organization for Women (NOW) in 1973 established the first task force on intimate partner violence. Various organizations established shelters for battered women. In 1976, there were about 20 such shelters throughout the United States; by 1982, there were approximately 300. Now, there are more than 2,000 community-based domestic violence programs in the United States, of which more than 1,300 provide shelter services to battered women.
(Dwyer, 1995; National Coalition Against Domestic Violence, 1999). Women's groups in Great Britain, Denmark, and Finland were also active in championing legal reforms and/or in establishing victims' services (Dwyer, 1995).

Many of these first shelters that were started in the United States were not “premeditated” ventures, but grew, instead, from political ideals and a grassroots movement (Brownmiller, 1999). Years later, the movement to protect battered women became the focus of social workers and others in professional careers. Brownmiller (1999: 275-276), commenting on the direction and the failings of the movement, noted the movement’s refusal to take a hard look at the women who stayed in battering relationships or who returned to their deadly batterers again and again. “Fear,” “economic dependence,” and “society’s lack of options” became the only permissible answers to the nagging question “Why doesn’t she leave?”

Acceptance and Self-Blame/Remaining

Lateef (1992) found in her ethnographic examination of Indo-Fijian women that many not only accept a husband’s right to physically discipline his wife, but also positively sanction this use of force. Men who do not beat their wives may become the subject of ridicule. The beatings generally stop when the sons are old enough to defend their mother. Ho (1990) similarly found in her study of domestic violence among Southeast Asians that Lao, Khmer, and Vietnamese women, particularly those who were first generation, accepted familial violence as a common occurrence. Mintz’ informant Taso, from a barrio in Puerto Rico, observed this situation in his barrio and expressed bewilderment that many individuals might feel as to why abused women might remain with their abusive partners:

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Because I know certain women here, their husband gives them a beating in the morning, and another at noon, and a third in the evening, and in spite of it they die living with him. I don't know if it is a question of love or what, but they don't leave him because of it (Mintz, 1960: 50).

Despite this seeming acceptance of their fate, these wives may remain in their situations due to a lack of power or a perceived lack of power, rather than true acceptance. Few have any place to go if they leave. Most are economically dependent on their spouses. Many are concerned that they might lose their children if they leave or that they will bring shame to their families by doing so. One woman explained how her course of action was not a decision to stay, but rather a decision not to leave:

I didn't leave...because abuse wasn't supposed to happen to women like me....I didn't leave...because I believed I could fix it....I didn't leave...because after a while I began to believe what Melvin kept telling me: that I was overreacting....I didn't leave... because there was nowhere to go for support....I didn't leave...because I grew accustomed to living a lie. ... (Weiss, 2000: 19-51)

In the United States, women who seemingly accept their violent fate may, in fact, be caught in a cycle of emotional dependency that is difficult to break. [This pattern has become variously known as the battered women's syndrome, the Stockholm syndrome, and traumatic bonding (Graham et al., 1995.)] Although the woman's continued relationship with her batterer appears to be voluntary, the underlying dynamic is hardly one of true acceptance.

There are several theories as to why abused partners continue to stay in the abusive relationships with their intimates. The first is premised on the theory of learned helplessness, which posits that the abused partner, usually the woman, remains because she has learned that her response to a beating does not affect what happens to her (Walker, 1979). Motivation is diminished as a result of the repeated beatings and
passivity intensifies (Gondolf, 1988). Proponents of this theory assert that the way to assist the battered partner is to show him or her repeatedly the alternatives and the mechanisms necessary to effectuate an alternative (Okun, 1986).

The theory that women are actually active survivors rather than helpless victims has been proffered as an alternative theory to explain why abused women stay in their abusive relationships (Gondolf, 1988). Aspects of this theory are reminiscent of the investment theory, discussed in chapter 2. This theory argues that women stay not because of passivity, but because they have tried to leave and have been unable to effectuate a departure. The victim's efforts at help-seeking are thought to increase as the violence increases. Whether those help-seeking efforts will be effective is dependent on the individual's resources, his or her commitment to the relationship, the individual's perceptions of what is best for him or her and any children, and the individual's exposure to violence as a child (Gondolf, 1988).

Fagan and Browne (1994) have elucidated Sherif and Hovland's (1961) explanation of how a battered woman gradually assimilates the violent episodes into her experience, ultimately incorporating them into her "latitude of acceptance."

The "latitude of acceptance" is the range of possibilities with which an individual is willing to agree or to which an individual can adapt. Latitudes are defined by end points, or anchors, that determine the extremes of the scale. Internal anchors are those originating within the individual, whereas external anchors are provided by outside factors or social consensus...According to social judgment theory, if stimuli continue to fall at the end of the continuum or even slightly above the end point, this will produce a shift of the range toward that anchor—or assimilation. However, if a stimulus is too far beyond the others, a contrast effect will ensue, and the stimulus will be perceived as being even more extreme than it really is (Fagan and Browne, 1994: 219-220).
The latitude of acceptance with respect to partner violence is affected by four factors: (1) the extent to which a woman has been socialized to accept the partner’s behavior; (2) the extent to which she has had prior similar experiences; (3) the extent to which external stimuli were supportive or incompatible with the appropriateness of the events; and (4) the extent to which she feels trapped in her situation (Fagan and Browne, 1994).

Accounts by women who have been battered indicate that the basis of a decision to stay may vary, depending upon the individual and the frequency, severity, and duration of the battering in the relationship. Weldon (1999: xvi-xvii) explained why she initially remained with her battering spouse:

I was vulnerable, naïve, blinded. I believed in a man I loved, and I did not believe he would keep hurting me. I stayed with him, and I chose not to see the man I married, the father of my three children, as a batterer who would always be a batter. I saw each instance as an isolated nightmare, all explained away, all forgiven. I didn’t connect them to see the pattern.

I excused his rage because I could not bear seeing him as he really was. That meant I would see myself as I was, and I refused to be a battered wife. But it was not until I could make that admission that the abuse could possibly end. It was not until I could say out loud what he had done that the carousel of pain would stop, and I could get off of the painted horse and walk away.

Weldon’s (1999: 102-103) seeming acceptance of the violence in her life was closely linked to her idealization of love and conceptualization responsibility:

I stayed because I didn’t understand how you could walk away from someone you had once loved. I could not understand how you could be present in a hospital labor and delivery room with a person and later say you didn’t love him anymore. How can it be so temporary? Love demands permanence. It was black and white. If you love, you stay. Like an obedient dog at the foot of the bed. Like people committed to each other.

I believed life held certain constants, like the sun rising and the waves hitting the shore and staying married and in love forever. I believed that once you were married, you solved any problem that arose.
In contrast, Schwartz' (2000: 25) initial decision to remain with her abusive husband derived from her own insecurity, low self-esteem, and false pride:

I had pride, but it was misdirected. Instead of focusing on important issues such as self-respect, inner peace, or living a normal, violence-free life, I would focus on what other people might think. A very short marriage, divorced again, being alone, growing old without a man, and being forced to start dating again. Although I felt I was a failure in every aspect of my life, I didn’t want others to view me in the same light. I had to hide the woman I had become. In my mind, it was easier to live with violence than admit I’d made yet another mistake.

SUMMARY

Responses to partner violence may occur at the level of society, the couple, or the individual. The level and nature of the response may be associated with the society’ perception and characterization of the event. During a large part of U.S. history, the physical beating of one’s wife was permissible and the wife was perceived as the deviant party for having failed to fulfill the expectations placed on her. More recently, the underlying presumption of U.S. law is that the battering individual is the deviant party and that a more appropriate response includes mandated treatment, arrest and possible imprisonment. Similar changes have been brought about in Puerto Rico’s laws relating to partner violence. In both the various states on the U.S. mainland and in Puerto Rico, however, these legal reforms have met with variable success and enthusiasm.

Various potential responses of the batterer and the assaulted intimate partner have been identified. The responses of the batterer have been found to include the offering of an account, which may often serve as an attempt to deny, excuse, justify, or minimize the conduct. These mechanisms have been found to be employed by batterers across various
cultures. Treatment is often a response to a mandate imposed in the context of the criminal system.

The assaulted partner may respond by leaving his or her partner, by help-seeking, by departure and help-seeking, by retribution, by committing suicide, by inflicting reciprocal violence, by isolation, by social organization, and by accepting his or her situation. The response of the assaulted partner may include a combination of these strategies. These types of responses have been found to occur across various cultures. Significant barriers may, however, prevent a battered intimate from acting; these barriers include language; nonresponsiveness on the part of the entity from whom help is sought; emotional difficulties associated with seeking help, such as shame and embarrassment; and the possibility of additional physical harm at the hands of the batterer.

The commonality of responses across cultures—the offering of accounts by the perpetrator, the victim, witnesses, the response or nonresponse of the larger society to partner violence, and the strategies of the victims—reflects similarities of experience across culture, religion, political structure, or geographical boundary, much as we saw in the occurrence of partner violence itself. Differences in both the nature of the response and the level (individual, couple, systemic) of that response reflect differing underlying assumptions regarding the cause or causes of partner violence and the nature of the intimate relationship. Legal reforms, such as those that have occurred in the United States and Puerto Rico, would seem to arise from a perception that the cause of partner violence, and hence its remedy, derives at least in part from systemic or cultural factors. In contrast, the ease with which an individual’s account of partner violence may influence the outcome may reflect the extent to which violence between intimates continues to be
perceived as an individual problem, regardless of any legal reforms that may have been
effectuated. For instance, the ease with which a man in Brazil may be excused for the
murder of his wife by representing the incident as an attempt to preserve his honor may
indicate that violence perpetrated by a man on his wife occurs in response to the wife’s
behavior. In other words, partner violence remains a “family matter.”
CHAPTER EIGHT

METHODS

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This dissertation investigates two research questions:

1. To what factor or factors do self-identified Puerto Rican respondents and self-identified non-Hispanic white respondents attribute blame for partner violence?

2. What solution or solutions do self-identified Puerto Rican respondents and self-identified non-Hispanic white respondents suggest in situations involving varying levels of partner violence?

METHODS

Approach

This research relied on the use of pseudo-vignettes, or short descriptions of situations that would prompt respondents to analyze the situation and relate it to their own experiences. Although not categorized as an elicitation technique by some writers (Schensul, LeCompte, Nastasi, and Borgatti, 1999), vignettes can be thought of as such. A vignette has been defined as a "description of a series of events taken to be representative, typical or emblematic … and normally is limited to a brief time span, to one or a few key actors, to a bounded space, or to all three" (Miles and Haberman, 1994: 81).

Individuals presented with vignettes are asked to respond to specific questions regarding the circumstances of the vignette. Vignettes allow respondents to discuss the...
situations freely without disclosing, unless they wish to do so, the details of their personal situations. These discussions, however, reveal their opinions about the incidents, which is the object of the research. In addition, because they are discussing fictitious characters rather than their own situations, they may divulge their actual opinions regarding the situations because there is no perceived threat. Finally, a vignette-focused approach permits an in-depth discussion of each situation. Vignettes have been used as an interview strategy in child abuse research (Giovannoni and Becerra, 1979), elder abuse research (Gioglio and Blakemore, 1982; Pratt et al., 1983), and in research related to rape (Bourque, 1989).

For this research, ten series of scenarios were constructed. These scenarios were not full-length vignettes telling a story, but instead consisted of several sentences describing an incident between two individuals; these sentences were used as prompts to begin discussion. The prompts in each series were constructed around the issues of marital status, severity of resulting injury, and sex of the individuals involved.

Series 1: Husband-wife; husband aggressive towards wife
Series 2: Husband-wife; wife aggressive towards husband
Series 3: Husband-wife; aggression bidirectional
Series 4: Unmarried male-female; male aggressive towards female
Series 5: Unmarried male-female; female aggressive towards male
Series 6: Unmarried male-female; violence bidirectional
Series 7: Male-male; same sex aggression unidirectional
Series 8: Male-male; same sex aggression bidirectional
Series 9: Female-female; same sex aggression unidirectional

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Series 10: Female-female; same sex aggression bidirectional

Within each series, the scenarios presented differing levels of aggression, ranging from loud yelling to stabbing with resulting physical injury. The situations that provided the basis for the vignettes are contained in the Appendix. This compilation contains the names used in the vignettes with the Puerto Rican respondents. The names used with non-Hispanic white respondents appear in parentheses after each vignette.

For each scenario presented the respondents were asked to address these questions:

1. What do you think caused this to occur?
2. What can be done, what should be done, and who should do it?

After obtaining informed consent from each respondent, a series of structured questions relating to demographic characteristics was administered. Following this portion of the interview, each respondent was presented with randomly selected scenarios. The scenario to be discussed was selected by asking the respondent to choose two numbers from pre-written numbers. The first number that was chosen was used to designate the series from which the scenario was to be taken; the second number signified which scenario in the series was to be selected. Respondents were asked to participate in the selection process in this manner in order to maintain their interest during the course of the interview. As an example, a participant was asked to choose a number. Suppose the first number selected was 3. This was then used to choose series 3. The number 3 was returned to the numbers and the respondent was asked to select a second number. Suppose the respondent again chose the number 3. This was used to select the third
scenario in series 3. If the participant had chosen 5 as the second number, scenario 5 of series 3 would have been selected.

Recall that this study utilized 10 different series, each of which comprised 6 to 8 scenarios that are similar within each series with respect to the sexual orientation, marital status, and direction of the violence, for a total of 74 different scenarios. Using the technique described above, each individual scenario was utilized anywhere from 2 to 30 times during the course of this study; each series was utilized between 46 and 78 times (see Table 3). Using this strategy, participants responded to 5 to 19 scenarios each, with differing levels of depth and intensity, for a total of 592 responses. The median number of participant responses to scenarios was 12, while the mode was 14. The variation in the number of vignettes addressed by each respondent was often attributable to the length of the response to each individual vignette. Longer responses to vignettes precluded response to a greater number of vignettes within the time frame. The number of vignettes discussed by each respondent was also dependent on the length of time that the individual was willing to remain. The implications of this variation in length of response and numbers of vignettes addressed are discussed in the section relating to interviews, below.

Sample Size

Sample size in qualitative research is dependent upon the information saturation point, i.e. the “point at which additional data collection, including interviews and observations, produces no new information about cultural domains, subdomains, or factors” (Schensul, Schensul, and LeCompte, 1999: 262). At this point, sufficient
Table 3. Number of Responses to Vignette Series by Gender and Ethnicity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Series</th>
<th>PRM (n=10)</th>
<th>PRW (n=16)</th>
<th>NHWM (n=9)</th>
<th>NHWW (n=10)</th>
<th>TOTAL (n=45)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1: Husband-wife; husband aggressive to wife</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2: Husband-wife; wife aggressive to husband</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3: Husband-wife; aggression bidirectional</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4: Unmarried male-female; male aggressive</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5: Unmarried male-female; female aggressive</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6: Unmarried male-female; aggression bidirectional</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7: Male-male; same sex aggression unidirectional</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8: Male-male; same sex aggression bidirectional</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9: Female-female; same sex aggression unidirectional</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10: Female-female; same sex aggression bidirectional</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key: PR=Puerto Rican; NHW=Non-Hispanic White; M=Men; W=Women

Redundancy occurs, whereby patterns of response begin to repeat themselves and do not generate new information (Trotter and Schensul, 1998). The point at which saturation is achieved may vary with the research question being asked and the particular context of the research. It has been recommended, however, that research into questions focusing on the meaning of an event or a descriptive question relating to values or beliefs include approximately 30 to 50 participants in interviews or participant observation (Morse, 1994).

A total of 45 individuals, (16 Puerto Rican women, 10 non-Hispanic white women, 10 Puerto Rican men, and 9 non-Hispanic white men) were included in this study. The number of responses generated from this sample is addressed below (see Interviews, below). The relatively small number of respondents in each subgroup would indicate that saturation could not be achieved. For instance, the inclusion of a greater number of Puerto Rican respondents could yield additional insights relating to the perceived causes of partner violence and potential remedies. Because of the potential that
saturation has not been achieved, and that additional lines of inquiry might have been identified by reliance on a larger sample within each group, the findings of this study can be considered only preliminary, but can serve to generate additional hypotheses to be tested in larger samples.

Recruitment

A convenience sample of participants was recruited through churches, social service organizations, clinics, educational and vocational training programs, and counseling/substance abuse treatment programs. The specific names of these entities are not included here due to concerns relating to confidentiality and agreements with the various entities. However, the entities included those that are centrally located in downtown Cleveland, entities that are on the west side of the county, and similar entities located on the east side of the county. Each entity was selected because it serves a client population that is ethnically and economically diverse and because it was willing to serve as a source of recruitment. These entities did not receive any remuneration from this study.

Individuals at the recruitment sites were made aware of the study through flyers that were placed on bulletin boards with the approval of the individual responsible at the facility; through presentations to participants of other programs, such as vocational education classes and church groups; and through referral from their provider at counseling/rehabilitation services. A small number of individuals were recruited via word of mouth from other participants and through flyers, although they did not remember where they had seen the flyers. (The flyers indicated that a study was being conducted to
examine what people thought about various behaviors in the context of relationships and that they would be paid $20.00 for their time.) A still smaller number of participants who were recruited indicated that they did not remember or did not know how they had heard about the study. The number of participants recruited from each source, and the number of recruitment locations within each category, are displayed in Table 4. For instance, recruitment efforts included four colleges and universities, which yielded two participants from these four sites.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 4. Recruitment of Participants by Type of Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PR-M (n=10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Churches (n=5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clinic/hospital (n=3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counseling program (n=3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drug/alcohol rehab (n=2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homeless shelter (n=2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Universities, colleges (n=4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocational programs (n=1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Word of mouth, flyers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key: PR=Puerto Rican; NHW=Non-Hispanic White; M=Men; W=Women

Many of the individuals recruited from this study were recruited through sites that could be characterized as devoted to individuals experiencing difficulties in life, such as shelters and counseling programs. Individuals experiencing their own troubles may have been more willing to participate or to talk for lengthier periods of time in order to process their own experiences. It is also possible, however, that individuals with personal experience with partner violence or other troubles may have been less willing to discuss...
these experiences because they did not wish to relive painful episodes in their lives or because they did not fully comprehend the events that they had survived or witnessed.

Almost all of the participants in this study had witnessed violence at some time. The impact of these experiences on their responses is not known. It is possible that these respondents may have tended to minimize the significance of lesser forms of violence, such as pushing, because they had witnessed much more severe occurrences. However, it is also possible that they may have become more highly sensitized to violence because they found it so reprehensible; this may be particularly true of individuals who experience some form of violence themselves.

In addition to affecting the nature of the responses, the sources of recruitment, as well as the restrictions on eligibility (see below) limit the generalizability of these findings. For instance, relatively few professionals participated in this study and a large number of participants were unemployed. Consequently, these findings cannot be generalized to, for instance, professionals in Cuyahoga County.

**Participants**

The following criteria were established for eligibility to participate:

1. self-identified ethnicity as U.S.-born non-Hispanic white or Puerto Rican, that is, born in one of the 50 states, a territory, or a possession of the United States, including Puerto Rico;
2. residence in Cuyahoga County;
3. age 18 to 45; and
4. willingness and ability to provide informed consent to participate.
The study was limited to individuals who self-identified as either Puerto Rican or U.S.-born non-Hispanic whites in order to address the hypotheses that had been formulated based upon the literature review. The inclusion of non-U.S.-born individuals would have created additional complexities that could not be addressed adequately without a significantly larger sample size. Because of the high rate of migration within the Cuyahoga County Puerto Rican population (based on this investigator’s previous experience with this population), a requirement of birth in the mainland of the U.S. would have resulted in difficulty in obtaining the requisite sample.

The sample was limited to residents of Cuyahoga County as a means of controlling for the influence of environmental factors. For instance, Lorain County includes significantly more rural areas than does Cuyahoga County. It is possible that respondents drawn from Lorain County could differ in significant ways from those in Cuyahoga County, resulting in the need to enlarge the sample size to address these differences. Some such differences could involve sociodemographic characteristics, while others might involve environmental-level factors. For instance, the level of public discussion about partner violence could differ across counties and result in differing levels of awareness regarding the underlying causes and the possible remedies. It would be difficult to capture such differences retrospectively due to absence or incompleteness of records relating to publicity and faulty memory on the part of the participants, but such differences could impact on the respondents’ answers.

Participants were limited to those 18 years of age and older for several reasons. First, individuals 18 or older are more likely to have been in a romantic or sexual relationship and to have considered the issue of partner violence. Second, the inclusion
of minors would have required obtaining parental consent. Minors who had witnessed violence within their homes could potentially be at increased risk if their parent or guardian believed that they were discussing such incidents.

Demographic characteristics of the study sample are displayed in Table 5. A larger proportion of the study participants were female, living without a partner, under the age of 40, and employed in nonprofessional capacities. However, there were no significant differences between the Puerto Rican participants and the non-Hispanic white participants, with the exception of education. A larger proportion of Puerto Rican than non-Hispanic white participants had completed 12 or fewer years of education. This finding is not surprising in view of the demographic characteristics of Cuyahoga County; it may be remembered that a large proportion of the county's Hispanic residents have not achieved a high level of education. As a point of explanation, 11 of the Puerto Rican respondents identified themselves as Christian, rather than specifying a particular denomination. This self-designation is common within the Puerto Rican community and may reflect any one of various circumstances: an individual’s indecisiveness in subscribing to a specific denomination, an individual’s lack of preference with regard to the denomination that he or she may attend at any given time; or an individual’s decision to leave a particular congregation in favor of one of a different denomination. Of the 45 participants, 44 reported having seen someone injured by another individual; 30 (66.7%) reported having been hurt themselves by another individual; 18 (40.0%) reported having inflicted harm on others.
The Interviews

Interviews ranged in length from approximately 1-1/2 hours to almost 5 hours, depending upon the participants' availability, the depth of their responses, and their level of interest. Participants responded to 5 to 19 vignettes each; the number of vignettes utilized varied across interviews due to the differences in the length of each interview and the depth of responses to each individual scenario presented.

The variation in the length of participants' responses to the vignettes may have been a function of whether or not they had actually experienced violence themselves, their willingness to discuss these events, and/or their general ability to communicate verbally. Individuals who had experienced violence may have offered more details about their own situations and the vignettes; the interviews may have provided them with an opportunity to process these incidents. However, it is also possible that individuals who experienced violence were less forthcoming because they did not wish to relive the events. It is not possible from the data to ascertain the likelihood of either bias.

Interviews were conducted at locations convenient to and designated by the participants, including individuals' homes, clinics, social service organizations, and churches. Each of the 6 in-home interviews were conducted by only this investigator due to safety considerations. In all cases, interviews were conducted out of the sight and the hearing of other individuals. Each participant was paid $20 for his/her participation in the interview.

Interviews included in this research were conducted by 3 women, including the interviewer. One was Puerto Rican; two were fluent in Spanish.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>Puerto Rican</th>
<th>White</th>
<th>p-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sex</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Marital status</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married or living with partner</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single, divorced, or widowed</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt;40</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;=40</td>
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<td>6</td>
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<td><strong>Education</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>&lt;=12 years</td>
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<tr>
<td>&gt;12 years</td>
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<td><strong>Religion</strong></td>
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<td>7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Methodist</td>
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<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pentecostal</td>
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<tr>
<td>Roman Catholic</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seventh Day Adventist</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
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<td><strong>Employment</strong></td>
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<td>Clerical</td>
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<td>Construction or manual labor</td>
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<td>Health or allied health</td>
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<td>1</td>
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<td>Professional</td>
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<td>Service industry</td>
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<td><strong>Earnings</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>High (&gt;=30,001/year)</td>
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<td>10</td>
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<td>Mid ($10,001-$30,000/year)</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>19</td>
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<td><strong>Hurt Others</strong></td>
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<td>9</td>
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</table>
Analysis

Interview tapes were transcribed verbatim; interviews conducted in Spanish were translated into English following initial transcription in Spanish. Several different strategies were used to analyze the data. Transcripts were examined for patterns and themes that emerged from the data. Data were also examined for concepts brought to the study from a theoretical perspective ("sensitizing concepts"), such as patriarchy, evolution, etc. In examining the data for themes, each participant was considered as a "case study."

SUMMARY

This study was designed to investigate two questions: (1) To what factor or factors do self-identified Puerto Rican respondents and self-identified non-Hispanic white respondents attribute blame for partner violence? and (2) What solution or solutions do self-identified Puerto Rican respondents and self-identified non-Hispanic white respondents suggest in situations involving varying levels of partner violence? These questions arise from the recognition that the proscriptions and norms that dictate the roles of men and women across cultures and subcultures may reflect both similarities and differences. These similarities and differences may, in turn, reflect commonalities and differences in the historical experience of the cultures.

The participants in this study are limited to a convenience sample of 45 self-identified Puerto Rican and non-Hispanic white men and women aged 18 to 45 who were residents of Cuyahoga County, Ohio. The small sample size may have obviated against the achievement of saturation, while the eligibility restrictions and the recruitment of
many of the respondents from sites that respond to individuals with problems do not allow the findings of this study to be generalized to other or larger samples. The findings from this study may, however, serve as the basis for the formulation of additional research questions that may be investigated empirically.
CHAPTER NINE
DISCOVERING THEMES

GENERAL APPROACH

As indicated, transcripts were examined for patterns and themes that emerged from the data. Data were also examined for concepts brought to the study from a theoretical perspective ("sensitizing concepts"), such as patriarchy, evolution, situational factors, etc. The analysis of the data for themes focused on two major topics: what caused the behavior depicted in the selected scenarios to occur and potential mechanisms for the resolution of the incidents depicted in the scenarios. In examining the data for themes, each participant was considered as a "case study." Each individual cited multiple reasons for the occurrence of the behaviors that were depicted in his or her selected scenarios, although not all of their proffered explanations were offered in response to each individual scenario. This chapter describes the classification of the participant responses by theme and pattern. Chapters 11 through 15 provide additional details relating to the specific themes, including the frequency of each class of response and the situations in which each response were offered.

UNCOVERING THE CAUSE OF PARTNER VIOLENCE

Several major themes relating to the cause of the depicted behaviors emerged from the transcripts: sex- and gender-associated behavior; environmental factors; mental illness/substance use disorders; and individual characteristics. Definitions of each of
these classifications and examples of statements that reflected each of these themes are provided below.

**Sex- and Gender-Associated Behaviors**

Explanations classified as “sex-associated” were those that referred to some biological mechanism as an explanation or partial explanation for the behavior depicted in the scenario. Consider the following examples:

Participant #101, a Puerto Rican female:

That’s common. Two lesbians. Mad at each other. Menopause.

Participant #102, a Puerto Rican male:

*Hormones.* He’s, we’re wanting sex with his boyfriend and his boyfriend didn’t want it or whatever. If you want something real bad, yeah, if I’m a real man, if I want sex real bad, well, I can’t say because I can handle it, but when I was with my girlfriend and she didn’t give me sex, I’d get real mad and I would hit her.

“Gender-associated behavior” is used here to refer to those responses that explained the depicted behavior as a function of the scenario actor’s gender role, often as it related to culture. This is to be distinguished from responses that focused on biological factors associated with the actor’s biological sex, such as hormones. Examples of gender-associated behaviors include:

Participant #105, a non-Hispanic white male:

That could also be a sexual part of it, like just their *social and ethnic background* does create a lot of times physical arguments not just verbal, where they start hitting each other. Like *my culture*, male is predominately dominant, okay, he is the majority of the time the main breadwinner and everything else and he expects certain things. Like if a woman’s home all day he expects his dinner to be done. Uh, he expects his children to be raised like they’re supposed to be where he puts certain responsibilities on the woman and, uh, he does whatever the man’s job is,
there's like a division and it can get out of hand where either one or the other doesn't do the job that their social upbringing brings in my social upbringing, children abuses is also prevalent...I think the guy should at least learn to defend himself if he got hurt by a woman, not that it's impossible but I don't think he should at least been able to subdue her to a point where one get hurt or the other.

Participant #356, a Puerto Rican female

She, they don't have the same sexual drive and maybe he likes sex more than her, she doesn't like having sex that much and he feels that he can, that he somehow, they are married, in a sense he owns her or that she is his wife and she should do everything to make him happy and fulfill all his wants and desires. This is common in men. I believe that they feel somehow that they pick someone to be with them, that that person should do everything else because they feel that or they can go and get it somewhere else. So somehow by being with that person is compromising their normal life, what they consider normal life, which is just go out and got what they want, whenever they want and as much as they want, so by being with somebody you are almost saying, well, since I choose you, you need to give everything I want.

Participant #418, a Puerto Rican female:

He was angry. In Spanish men, there's a lot of abuse so he's mad because his dinner is late.

Environmental and Situational Factors

The category of "environmental factors" encompasses a wide range of circumstances that can arise in the course of any intimate relationship. These include stresses associated with children, finances, and actual or perceived infidelity. Many times, the various stresses were interwoven into a single response.

Children

Participant #105 , a non-Hispanic white male:

Mostly a lot of men express their anger verbally and it's very easy to raise a voice when you are angry and, uh, it's hard, I mean, I'm in a situation where I know a lot of times my wife and I argue. Maybe some, somebody's spent too much money or, um, they have plans and the plans
got totally wiped out by something, nothing, somebody not thinking but, uh, that individual’s ideas or motives for that moment or kids, that’s always a big one, that’s the biggest one between my wife and myself is the children where she defends them where I think they should stand on their own 2 feet and they don’t, though, die. Once you’re over 21, you can’t survive, die... Well, we always argue about her oldest son. In my opinion, he’s a useless hog.

Participant #165, a Puerto Rican female:

They are fighting over their child. They punish the child. Well, one doesn’t believe in hitting the child and the other one does so the father, for example, believes in hitting the child and the mother doesn’t and he goes ahead and does it even though he knows she doesn’t agree and both feel strongly about it and each time that happens they just begin to fight and escalates.

Finances

Participant #422, a non-Hispanic white female:

Little fights can get out of hand. Just as little things can sometimes inflict pain, it could be something as stupid as who’s going grocery shopping or you stole $5,000. Maybe he didn’t do it on purpose but you never know. He could have gotten so frustrated with himself or with her that he wanted to shut her up. I just let it all out and he just lets it all out and it all goes back and forth. It just happened last night. I haven’t been to bed yet...it got out of hand...it just went back and forth. The one last night lasted like 2 hours. Um, he buys these moneymaking ordeals off TV a lot...I call it get rich quick and I get mad that he has all this crap sitting down there and does nothing with it...and he told me I’m the one bringing him down and shut up. It’s not my fault...it was dumb. We hadn’t had a fight in a while so we were about due.

Especially if the money is joint. When the money is combined, a lot of things conflict about who has more, who makes more so that means it’s more mine...He’s real old-fashioned that if he doesn’t make more money than I do then he’s not a good provider which I think is stupid. He can think what he wants...I’m not going to rub it in his face or nothing.

Participant #362, a non-Hispanic white male:

Uh, he probably got cut off from work and she got, where’s the money going to come from, how are we going to do this, what about the baby, stuff like that, you know, no big deal.
Infidelity

Participant #403, a non-Hispanic white female

My sister was married to the same man for 19 years and he accused her of cheating on him and she hadn’t and he accused her every time you turned around but that’s because he cheated on her a lot and he kind of, you know, and men have this problem, they can’t forgive, they truly can’t, it’s harder for a man to forgive in a situation than an woman and, um, he kept telling her she was cheating on him and she kept telling him, no she wasn’t so finally she did because he accused her so much, she said I’m being accused so much I might as well so she slept with someone and so what happens is it was stupid of her. She found out that Cecil her husband was sleeping with her best friend and so he was accusing her of the guy and she was accusing him of the woman and then when she admitted to him he lost it and I wasn’t down there, in West Virginia, he beat her so bad, he beat her so bad and I did not know for almost a week and I talk to her almost every day, I did not know how bad until I saw the pictures. I mean he beat her black and blue from the top of her head to the bottom of her feet and he took the bed they slept in and he put it in the middle of the road and he burned it so everybody would think she was a real slut and I thought, oh my God, I could not believe how bad he beat her.. I mean he just beat her and beat her and beat her and beat her and beat her.

Participant #365, a Puerto Rican female

This was a problem of passion. She found some lipstick on his shirt and she was jealous and started to yell and started to hit him because she said you are with another woman and he said it was only a dance and she didn’t believe him and got a knife with the intention of killing him, an intent to kill is something that the law says is a felony, and here jealousy has brought it to a crisis.

Substance Use and Mental Illness

Substance use and mental illness figured prominently in respondents’ explanations. Examples of explanations involving alcohol and drug use include the following.

Participant #422, a non-Hispanic white female:
It could be that is *she was on drugs or alcohol*, either or, there are a lot of alcoholics in my family and they tend to be very hostile once they reach a certain point and the littlest things set them off...or it could be that the other one is using drugs and she is trying to explain to her how bad it is, you know how addicting alcohol and stuff like that is and maybe she just doesn't want to see it and just takes it a little too far and flies off the wall and hits her.

Participant #361, a non-Hispanic white male:

Most likely, I'd say an *argument over him using drugs* or, uh, him using drugs, her getting mad about him using drugs or alcohol and the money, whatever, is going towards his drug use or supporting his habit...uh, he got angry and he threw something at her.

Participant #362, a non-Hispanic white male:

Ok, *he was probably drinking or doing drugs* or something and she was probably fed up with it and she probably told him if you don’t stop I’m going to do something and he probably come back with I did this when I married you, you don’t have no right to say nothing to me, and they probably got into a physical argument and she probably grabbed a knife without thinking, but it’s still an assault.

Participant #101, a Puerto Rican female:

Uh, *he’s been drinking*. Um, he wants some money, she don’t want to give him no money, he wants to go back out drinking so maybe he’s trying to take it from her and she’s defending herself, so she pulls a knife.

Participant #418, a Puerto Rican female:

*Drinking or drugs* usually makes things worse. It enhances the way we think and it certainly distorts the way we think and causes violent behavior and people do and think things that they normally wouldn’t. That’s your artificial courage. Sometimes it gives you a false courage, a false strength, an adrenaline and people will feel like they’re stronger even if it’s momentarily...you react differently, you know.

Examples of explanations relating to mental illness include:

Participant #422, a non-Hispanic white female:

*She might be a psycho. She could be split personality,* you don’t know. This is common with Puerto Ricans...[my friend’s mother] if she even suspected that her boyfriend was looking at someone else, she would go...
crazy. She even went after one of them with a candlestick. She was just, you know, psycho at times. It was like a split personality kind of thing. Around men she was psycho and around us she was sweet mother who made us fried beans and rice.

Participant #105, a non-Hispanic white male:

_Could be mentally sick._

Participant # 360, a Puerto Rican female:

This is the intention to kill, because if you stab like that, without doing something, that is the intention to kill, _this woman is crazy_, she needs to see a psychiatrist, to see someone. _At best, she has lost her mind (“se le fue la mente”)._

**Individual Characteristics**

The category of “Individual Characteristics” encompasses proffered explanations that refer to characteristics of one or both of the scenario actors. As an example, some respondents explained various situations by referring to an actor’s insecurity or need to control in a relationship, while others emphasized an actor’s lack of self-esteem. In comparison with other themes, “individual characteristics” was advanced as a potential cause of the incident fairly rarely.

The following excerpts exemplify such responses. The individual characteristics deemed responsible for the situation appear in italics.

Participant #103, a non-Hispanic white female:

He wanted _power and control_ and he wasn’t getting it. Maybe she was arguing back or not obeying. He might have ordered her around.

Participant # 106, a non-Hispanic white male:

It could be a _power play_, okay, _dominance_, us he might have told her she couldn’t do something or she had to do something that she didn’t really
want to do. I think from experience with myself I think, uh, you go to the next stage to maintain your dominance. If you can remain dominant on a low level it may not go any farther but if it starts to equal out you know and especially if it starts to go the other way and you start to lose power and you start to lose charge, okay, some people can’t deal with that.

OTHER THEMES

Several other themes emerged that were not specifically related to causation, but that reflected participant views. These related to the relationship between violence and sex and sexual orientation. Examples of these themes are as follows:

Violence and Sex

She tortures her and then they will make love. Many people do this and then make love. Because this is passion. There are different classes of love. They pull each other’s hair, they scratch, they squeeze, they tear each others eyes and then they make love. They say that that is the best love that there is. It is love. First they torture each other and then they make love. (Participant #360, a Puerto Rican female, in response to a scenario in which a female hits her female partner)

Sexual Orientation

We live in a society where in this community there are many people who come from this class of life. They do not respect each other. This situation [homosexuality] is not very agreeable. They are students. If they were professionals, you would not see this, two men having this type of relationship...we don’t know the sicknesses that exist between homosexuals, they know nothing of religion. There are professionals who know more about this type of situation (Participant #376, male, responding to a scenario in which both men hit each other and one was bruised).

DECIDING WHAT TO DO

Several themes emerged in analyzing the data for potential resolutions.

Participants often responded to the question of what could or should be done with
reference to one or more strategies that have been noted in the existing literature. In particular, the possibilities of leaving the relationship, calling the police, or seeking counseling were most often presented by respondents. Sometimes, the respondents offered multiple possibilities for resolving a particular incident. Several examples of each are set forth below as a means of illustrating how these responses were classified. Unlike some of the explanations offered to explain why a situation occurred, the suggestions for their resolution were often more concise and direct.

**Leaving the Relationship**

Participant #360, a Puerto Rican female:

_They can leave the marriage._ In this case that is what I would do if a man doesn’t understand that if he came to my house and threw things at me and for this I leave him.

Participant #379, a Puerto Rican male:

_She should leave him_ because he is hitting her, he is always drunk and hitting her. They can look for a marriage counselor. But she should leave him because they fight because he is drunk every day.

**Calling the Police**

Participant #103, a non-Hispanic white female:

_What should be done? Call the police._ Because I didn’t so she should. Because next time she might be hurt.

Participant #362, a non-Hispanic white male:

_Definitely the police should be called_ in this situation. Whoever was around and seen the situation or heard the situation should call the police because that type of situation they have to get immediate help and I got to figure that one of them would seek it, so they have to get a police, they have to go in front of the judge.
Participant #368, a Puerto Rican male:

I think *she could call the cops* or something on her.

**Seeking Counseling**

Participant #104, a non-Hispanic white woman:

I would *consider counseling* on her part. If you, if the husband would also see this as wrong then it could be a *joint counseling* also. But if he doesn’t see it as wrong or a problem, then she has to seek help for herself.

Participant #418, a Puerto Rican woman:

Go for help, *go for counseling* because some people stay in a relationship but will never be treated nicely. She needs professional help. You can’t just say in your next relationship you’ll be treated better so she has to work out self-esteem issues.

**Other Options**

Several other possibilities emerged more rarely from the responses to the scenarios, including help-seeking within the health care/social service context and having the actors in the scenario discuss between themselves what happened and attempt so reach a mutual understanding.

**Other Help-Seeking**

Examples of responses suggesting help seeking apart from counseling or the police include the following; the suggested solutions that are classified as “other” appear in italics.

Participant #103, a non-Hispanic white female:
I think that she should leave. Go wherever she needs to. To a shelter but a lot of women don’t go there because ...it’s a scary place to think of going. Well, for one thing, they’re not in the best neighborhoods and they can be unsafe, too because if there are people, depending on how hard their life has been, there can be people who are abusive in the shelter and I think, I think a lot of women who don’t go to shelters because they’re afraid.

Participant #101, a Puerto Rican female:

I’d recommend counseling, marriage counseling or even go to a shelter if it continues, a shelter for battered women but, um, I wouldn’t go on right away with him. I think I’d go for maybe a while, not just go to the hospital, but stay away, go to a shelter.

Participant #418, a Puerto Rican female:

She should go get help till she’s safe, to a shelter.

Participant #420, a non-Hispanic white male:

She should first try to get to the hospital and tell the proper authorities what he looked like and tell them about the incident and get him apprehended.

It may be important to delineate specifically sources of potential help-seeking (police, counseling, and other forms) to understand where individuals are most likely to seek assistance. This information may be critical as an element in assessing a community’s need for specific services.

Talking It Out

Some individuals suggested talking about the conflict or the situation as a potential remedy:

Participant #351, a non-Hispanic white female:
Maybe they could talk about it if he doesn’t like her yelling at him all the time, maybe they should sit down and talk about it and discuss other things that she can do if she’s upset.

Participant #422, a non-Hispanic white female:

Give her time to cool off and then talk to her rationally.

Participant #362, a non-Hispanic white male:

They should talk to each other, try to work it out, instead of going for the knives.

Participant #423, a non-Hispanic white male:

Talk to her about hitting.

Retaliation

Few participants also raised the possibility of retaliation in response to the scenario. Examples of excerpts classified as such include the following:

Participant #403, a non-Hispanic white female:

If I ever got beat like that [her sister] I would seriously hurt the man, I really think I would seriously hurt the man...They’ve been divorced almost 2 years and he won’t let her [date] and he’s dated numerous women...She never dated another man and he still calls her names and whines about what she did to him.

Participant #105, a non-Hispanic white male:

If something like that happened to me? They would eat their knife that they stubbed me with. It’s, I don’t believe in weapons. You hit me, it’s one of those, you hit me, you say please hit me back. It’s very simple.

Conversion

Although rare, conversion from homosexuality to heterosexuality was offered as a remedy in situations involving same-sex conflict. The following excerpt provides an example.
They must convert the men and leave homosexuality because it makes them sick. I say that they are men but it is like a sickness. I don’t know how many gays are gays because they were violated during their childhood and if you took them to a psychologist, to medical people who could, that also there are hormones that develop more than others that make them like this, it is not that they want to be like this but there are others that like it, this is true. The only thing I can say is to look for two women and leave them. (Participant #365, female, in response to two men involved in mutual hitting)

SUMMARY

The identification of themes was premised first on an examination of the data for concepts that were brought to the study from a theoretical perspective. As examples, these concepts reflect culture-oriented themes, such as patriarchy; psychosocial-oriented themes, such as violence as a learned behavior (social learning theory); biology-related themes, such as the sexual proprietoriness of males as a function of biology (evolutionary psychological perspective); and societal-level variables, such as the ability to access supportive and preventive services (ecological theory). This process yielded the following themes related to the cause of the violence: sex-associated behavior; gender-associated behavior; the environmental and situational factors of children, finances, and infidelity; substance use and mental illness; and individual characteristics of jealousy, insecurity, and a need for power and control. Themes related to possible solutions that were identified in this manner include leaving the relationship, calling the police, seeking counseling, help-seeking from other sources, such as shelters, and retaliation.

Many of the themes that were identified are pertinent to more than one causal theory. For instance, the availability of supportive and preventive services to victims may be relevant to patriarchy theory as an indication of the extent to which the larger
society condones or tolerates partner violence and to ecological theory, as a factor relevant to the ability of women to leave a physically abusive relationship.

In addition, the data were examined for themes that arose from the data. Two themes related to causality were identified in this manner: the association of violence with sex and sexual orientation. In the context of finding solutions to partner violence, several themes arose from the data, rather than from a theoretical perspective: talking about the problem between the parties involved and conversion from homosexuality to heterosexuality as a means of ending the physical violence between same-sex partners.
CHAPTER TEN

THE PUERTO RICAN SAMPLE

IDENTIFYING THE CAUSE OF PARTNER VIOLENCE

Sex- and Gender-Associated Behaviors

Sex-Associated Behaviors

Table 6 sets forth the proportion of the Puerto Rican sample that offered a particular explanation in response to the scenarios presented.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Women (N=16)</th>
<th>Men (N=10)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n (%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Causation</td>
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<td>3 30.0</td>
<td>8 30.8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Finances</td>
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<td>5 50.0</td>
<td>7 26.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Infidelity</td>
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<td>Substance use</td>
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<td>8 80.0</td>
<td>16 61.5</td>
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<td>Mental illness</td>
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<td>Individual characteristics</td>
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<tr>
<td>Violence and sex</td>
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<td>1 10.0</td>
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<td>Conversion</td>
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*Participants provided multiple responses.
A total of 5 of 16 Puerto Rican women (31.3%) and 4 of 10 Puerto Rican men (40.0%), for a total of 34.6% of the Puerto Rican sample, indicated that the behavior depicted in the scenario was somehow associated with biological mechanisms linked to the actor’s sex. (See Table 6.) For instance, in responding to a scenario involving an unmarried man who forced his female partner to have sex, Participant #365, a Puerto Rican female, stated, “His sexual appetite, he did not have control of himself and he forced her,” indicating that his behaviors are essentially governed by an uncontrollable biological force. Similarly, Participant #356, also a Puerto Rican female, explained why a married man had to force his wife to have sex by stating, “They don’t have the same sexual drive.”

Some respondents were consistent throughout various scenarios in their emphasis on a biology-focused theme. For instance, participant #102, a Puerto Rican male, emphasized biological causes in several of his responses.

Scenario: Two men lovers; forced sex; one is hurt physically

Response: *Hormones.* He’s, we’re wanting sex with his boyfriend and his boyfriend didn’t want it or whatever. If you want something real bad, yeah, if I’m a man, if I want sex real bad, well I can’t say that because I can handle it, to day I can but when I was with my girlfriend and she didn’t give me sex, I’d get real mad and I would hit her. I didn’t get what I wanted so I got real mad, so I would just go off and it would ruin my whole day and it would ruin her day because you know what’s this all about, sex or something you know. Today I would just go to the door. I mean, I’m not going to chase it, you know, I could be with a woman naked and I could be naked and if she don’t want it and I don’t want it, the way she touches me, the way I touch her, if she wants it she responds back or if she touches me if I don’t respond back, well, then, hell, we sleep.

In another scenario in which a man and a woman are not married and he forces her to have sex, with no resulting physical injury, the same participant stated:
‘Cause she didn’t want to have no sex. And he forced himself on her. So it’s just that he should not force himself on her, what pleasure is he going to get if it’s just himself, he’s thinking about himself, he’s not thinking about her. The sex role behavior. Just that once he’s having sex hormones and he thinks he can go home and have sex with his partner and she doesn’t want it and he decides well if you don’t want it I’ll take it anyways, being selfish.

In response to scenarios involving same-sex partners, the characterization of their interaction based upon biological mechanisms appeared stereotypical. Consider, for instance, the following excerpts.

Participant #101, a Puerto Rican female

Scenario: Female lovers, both yell.

Response: That’s common. Two females, lesbians. Mad at each other. Menopause.

Participant #102, a Puerto Rican male

Scenario: Female lovers, both throw objects, no injuries

Response: On the rag. PMS, you know.

These explanations reflect the biological theory of partner violence. None of the individuals, however, were able to articulate clearly why they believed that partner violence was biologically based.

Gender-Associated Behaviors

Ten of the Puerto Rican women (62.5%) and 5 of the Puerto Rican men (50.0%) for a total of 57.7% of the Puerto Rican sample, attributed the behavior in question to violations of behavioral expectations often associated with a specific gender. As an example, consider the response of Participant #365, a Puerto Rican Pentecostal female,
who stated in response to a scenario involving a married man who forced his wife to have
sex, resulting in physical injury:

She, they don’t have the same sexual drive and maybe he likes sex more
than her, she doesn’t like having sex that much and he feels that he can,
that he somehow, they are married, in a sense he owns her or that she is
his wife and she should do everything to make him happy and fulfill all his
wants and desires. This is common in men. I believe that they feel
somehow that they pick someone to be with them, that that person should
do everything else because they feel that or they can go and get it
somewhere else. So somehow by being with that person is compromising
their normal life, what they consider normal life, which is just go out and
get what they want, whenever they want and as much as they want, so by
being with somebody you are almost saying, well, since I choose you, you
need to give everything I want.

The following responses are also representative of those of the Puerto Rican participants.

Participant #355, again a Puerto Rican female, but who self-identified as a Roman
Catholic, addressed the role of the man and wife in determining who should resolve a
conflict between them and the nature of that resolution:

The husband is the one who decides [who stays]. He decides who stays or
not. I [the man] say I do not want to be with you, we are going to separate
to stop this violence. If it is the man, if you are the man, you decide, you
do everything in the house, there is no question, you are the man, it is the
man who must decide.

Participant #364, also a Pentecostal Puerto Rican female, explained why a husband hit his
wife:

She was asking him permission to go out dancing because when one has a
husband the obligation of the wife is to tell him where you are going. . .
He came home from work and she did not have the food ready, he was
hungry. When a woman marries she must be aware that if the man goes to
work and earns the bread each day to support her, it is assumed that when
he comes home he will find the house clean, his things done and the food
made. There is no excuse because she is in the house. Even if she works
outside the house, there are fast food meals, you put them in the
microwave, you know there is no excuse because there is always
something you can do, you don’t have to be there all the time. She can do
Participant #369, a Christian Puerto Rican female, explained why some husbands might yell at their wives:

This happens often. But now men and women are also like this. But she can say nothing and this happens. There are women that the husband says something and they stay there like nothing, it looks dirty, there are women who are very disorganized, and at times the man, like that one, shocks them because there are men like that. She does not attend well to the household, the question of cleanliness, or the children. I had a neighbor who spent time watching the television like that, 12 hours she did not give milk, see the children crying for hunger and she said, I have cooked for today. This happens often in marriage. She is a bobo [jerk]. You know that there are visionary men who want the woman to make bread, is brought up well. There are men when the woman does not attend to them in bed, they are like this.

One Puerto Rican woman (Participant #418) offered the possibility that confusion related to gender roles could underlie a man’s aggression towards women. She explained in response to a scenario involving a man who forced an unmarried woman to have sex, resulting in injury, that “He may not understand about real masculinity.”

Ten of the Puerto Rican respondents (38.5%) made reference to various aspects of Latino culture specifically in responding to the scenarios. Seven of these 10 responses (70.0%) were made by Latinas. This is revealing in that it constitutes 43.8% of the total sample of 16 Puerto Rican women who attributed partner violence, at least in part, to aspects of Latino culture. For instance, participant #101, a Puerto Rican female, explained about a scenario involving a married couple who had engaged in mutual stabbing with no resulting injury:

See a lot of Latino men like to have their wives, they like to beat them, impregnate them, have kids and have them sit in the house so they can do
all their whoring around and that’s the truth... I don’t know. The culture. Very hard headed and very tempered.

Similarly, participant #418, also a Puerto Rican female, spoke about Spanish men in general in responding to a scenario involving a married couple in which the husband yelled at the wife:

He was angry. In Spanish men, there’s a lot of abuse so he’s mad because his dinner is late.

Participant #401, also a Puerto Rican female, offered a similar explanation:

She didn’t have supper in time. With Hispanics, the slightest thing can set him off.

Four of the 7 Puerto Rican women (57.1%) who referred to Latino culture made specific mention of machismo and/or marianismo. This constitutes fully one-quarter of the total sample of 16 Puerto Rican women who offered machismo as an explanatory factor for partner violence. Consider the response of Participant #359:

Scenario: Man and woman are married, both yell:

Response: The woman must decide what to do. I think we women have a mechanism in us for more compassion than men. Well, with us, you know, we have the theme of marianismo and machismo, you know that the women suffer a lot, like the Virgin Maria, you know, we have a sense of seeing things more clearly than men. We women have little desire but we have a large understanding, you know, a sense, for example, we can go to a place and know quickly that something is not right. Like women, I think we have a sixth sense of something bad, like a mother, you know, you feel an attachment with your children. You know with men, machismo is like they feel very macho, that they do not have to answer to anyone, they are the chief, that what they say goes, they do not cry, they stay strong and die in the inside, they are not demonstrative. This is because when they are born we tell them do not cry, do not cry because you are macho, machos do not cry, from the time they are born we tell them this. You know, my first husband was Puerto Rican, my second husband was black and the father of my child is a white gringo. All were the same, all had this machismo complex, it did not matter what their race is, but I think it is more in Hispanics, but all classes of men have it, the same machismo.
Another Puerto Rican female, Participant #364, responded to the same scenario by stating,

Many times the man is very *machista* and yells at the woman for no reason. *Machista* meaning he has the right to do everything and her, nothing. Um, they say, I am in the street and you are in the house, this is what the man says. So, you are my wife, if you think you can go outside, you must ask me for permission because I am your husband.

Yet another Puerto Rican female discussed *machismo* in the context of a situation involving a married couple, where the husband threw an object at the wife, but she was not hurt:

The reason that it is so serious is that in marriages, in domestic cases, they start to throw and they start to argue one time and they say it will not happen again and then they come and do it again and many times they are killed, you know, one time it starts and you are running from danger from one thing or another, for this reason I made it at this level. Many times in marriages there are misunderstandings, there is no consideration, it is lost, many times respect is lost in the marriage...the men like all the time that the woman submits to them, you understand me, there is machismo. *Machismo* is the sense that they believe that because they are the head of the household, the woman has no voice, no vote, only a word from them and it doesn’t matter if they are god or they are bad, their word is what has value, what matters. I believe that if they are the head of the household and when they are responsible, they follow their responsibility because many times I know women who have friends and they are alone, eating and sleeping and there is no other responsibility other than that I am the man of the house, I am going to work, I am going to support my family, etc. only they are *machismo*, you know, this is what I can understand of *machismo*. (Participant #365)

Another Puerto Rican woman stated in response to several scenarios:

*He is machista*. He is *machista* because the man can do everything and the woman, nothing. He goes out with his friends and she cannot go out with her friends and he has habits, he likes to dominate the woman. *Machista* is like I want to be “mala fe” I consider it to be mala fe...they believe that they are men, like he is the man, he believes that they are living in the “olden times” (los tiempos de antes) (Participant #375)
Three Puerto Rican men, or 30.0% of the sample of Puerto Rican men, also referred to elements of Latino culture, implicitly or explicitly, in their responses, although they did not mention *machismo* or *marianismo* using these terms. Consider the following:

They’re screaming at each other but it’s not something that hurt them, you know what I’m saying? Nag, constant bickering, it’s constant nag...you know it’s just constantly getting on his nerves or whatever. He comes into the house and he can’t even sit down and relax real good when she’s already on him telling him do this, do that, and he came in from work at 8, 9 hours or whatever. It’s more frequent in a woman than a man, I would believe so. A woman’s gotta have her way, she’s got to have her things the way she wants it. They are stressed out from their jobs, she’s a housewife, that’s why she’s nagging. You know, she doesn’t have very much friends, she doesn’t socialize with a lot of people; that’s why she’s always constantly nagging. She should see herself that she’s secluded, all she does is wake up in the morning and sees four walls. She cleans, cooks, that all she does, goes to sleep. Yeah, she’s bored, she’s doing the same thing, she needs some other excitement in her life. She keeps saying the same thing over and over. Like as far as, not all the Spanish community, but like the older crowd, maybe it would happen in the older crown because of their old beliefs. It’s not like with the younger generation where the woman is conquering in a man’s world, she goes out more, she’s having more profession than a man, going to corporate institutions so it’s busy, it’s not a thing, oh, I married you and you’re stuck in the house, you know, barefoot and pregnant and take care of the house as they say. (Participant # 367, responding to a scenario involving a married man and wife yelling at each other)

If he loves her enough, there is no obligation. He is an egoist. He wants to live with her but she doesn’t want to accept the mistreatment, physical or sexual. It seems that she has religious customs and comes from good culture or a good family and she doesn’t want a relationship like that. She wants to form a home to be happy. Because she wants to form a home, to marry, to be happy. I think that he comes from a low family (una familia baja) (Participant #376, commenting in response to a scenario involving an unmarried man and woman, where the woman is forced to have sex, with a resulting injury)

Now, I’ve seen that a lot. They [Puerto Ricans] expect the wife to be, when they get home, with their dinner served...They expect the wife to cater them, you know. (Participant #102, responding to a scenario involving an unmarried couple engaging in mutual hitting).
The respondents in this study did not appear resentful or critical of the cultural characteristics that they identified as playing a role in the partner conflict. Indeed, many of the respondents, as indicated by the selected excerpts, expressed implicitly or explicitly their disapproval of what they perceived to be a breach of the responsibilities traditionally delegated to a particular role, most often that of the woman.

Of the 10 Puerto Rican respondents who specifically offered aspects of Puerto Rican/Latino culture to explain the scenarios, 4 self-identified as Christian without a specific affiliation and only 2 self-identified as Roman Catholic. (This latter figure represents 40.0% of the Puerto Ricans who self-identified as Roman Catholic and 50.0% of the Puerto Ricans who specifically referred to *machismo* and/or *marianismo*.) The 4 individuals who did not specify an affiliation may at one time have been raised in a specific faith and have left the faith. Alternatively, they may have refrained from identifying a specific denomination because they feel that their present-day views and/or practices are in conflict with the tenets of their denomination. It would appear from these findings that the concepts underlying *machismo* and *marianismo* are reflected throughout the culture, regardless of religious background, although the concepts may not be used in conjunction with the specific terms.

Eight of the 15 Puerto Rican men and women, or slightly more than one-half, indicating that the partner violence was related to a violation of gender-associated behavior were born in Puerto Rico. It is possible that their emphasis on the violation of gender-associated behaviors derived from their experiences earlier in life in Puerto Rico where, historically, men and women have often had somewhat rigidly defined gender roles, across social classes. The ethnographic research of Lewis and Bourgois, for
instance, appears to indicate that significant frustration has resulted for many men following a series of economic upheavals in Puerto Rico and the consequent difficulty of both supporting one’s family and adjusting to women’s increasing independence. Such frustration, it appears, may be associated with violent interactions.

**Environmental and Situational Factors**

The biopsychosocial perspective and the social learning and ecological theories, explored in chapter four, attribute partner violence in whole or in part to situational factors, such as financial stresses. In addition, empirical research indicates that situational factors such as poverty may play a role in partner violence. For instance, women who received aid through what was known as Aid to Families with Dependent Children were three times as likely to have experienced partner violence during the preceding year in comparison with non-recipient women (Corlett, 1999). Participants offered three environmental or situational factors to explain partner violence: children, finances, and infidelity.

*Children*

A total of 5 of the 16 Puerto Rican women (31.3%) and 3 of the 10 Puerto Rican men, (30.0%), constituting 30.8% of the Puerto Rican sample, indicated that stress, tension, or disagreements related to childrearing could provoke partner violence. The following interview excerpts are representative of these responses.

They are fighting over their child. They punish the child. Well, one doesn’t believe in hitting the child and the other one does so the father, for example, believes in hitting the child and the mother doesn’t and he goes ahead and does it even though he knows she doesn’t agree and both feel
strongly about it and each time that happens they just begin to fight and escalates. [Participant #356, a Puerto Rican female, on why an unmarried couple is engaging in mutual hitting]

They might have kids and well, and they think about whether we should stay together, we're a family, we should raise the children together, um, nobody else will ever love me, nobody will want me with children. [Participant #418, a Puerto Rican female, responding to a situation involving forced sex between an unmarried man and woman]

The baby was crying. He came home from work and couldn’t sleep. They are both young. He starts to yell at her because of the baby. (Participant #379, a Puerto Rican male, on why a married couple is engaging in mutual hitting, resulting in an injury to the wife)

**Finances**

Financial difficulties were offered as an explanation for partner conflict by 2 Puerto Rican women (12.5%) and 5 Puerto Rican men (50.0%), representing 26.9% of the Puerto Rican sample. The following excerpts are representative of the responses received.

They are arguing over money. (Participant #418, a Puerto Rican woman, explaining why two women are throwing things at each other, with no resulting injury)

This is what men do to women. He didn’t give her the check. There is nothing to cover expenses, all the money went outside. (Participant #357, a Puerto Rican woman, explaining why an unmarried woman hit her male partner)

She spent more money than she had to, charged up that credit card. (Participant #102, a Puerto Rican male, explaining why a married woman was throwing things at her husband)

They’re talking about money. He is supposed to give her money for bills and he can’t pay. (Participant #379, a Puerto Rican male, responding to a scenario involving a married man who throws things at his wife, with no resulting injury)

The interactive gender role strain/conflict paradigm posits that (1) gender differences are the result of cultural pressures placed on individuals to conform to gender
norms; (2) men have been socialized to be aggressive in order to fulfill the traditional restrictive roles of provider and protector and consequently have been required to relinquish a personal definition of self in favor of a pseudo-self; (3) men are violent (a) because they have been oversocialized to a traditional masculine role that prescribes aggressive behavior as a component of masculinity and (b) the relinquishment of a personal definition of self results in a chronic state of anxiety and feelings of inadequacy so that (4) when confronted by feelings of dependency, a fear of abandonment, or the possibility of humiliation that threaten their gender role (5) in the context of a society that accords privilege to men, (6) men attempt to resolve those uncomfortable feelings through the use of violence against women.

The fact that more men than women identified financial difficulties as a source of partner violence may suggest that (1) these men may experience stress or anxiety in fulfilling adequately what they perceive to be their role as providers; (2) familiarity with or a sense of the positive aspects of machismo—that of provider and protector of the family—may have prompted the Puerto Rican men, and perhaps the women, to suggest finances as a cause of partner conflict or violence; and/or (3) knowledge of the economic situation faced by many Puerto Rican families in Cuyahoga may have triggered these responses. A challenge to one’s ability to fulfill this role obligation could lead to increased conflict and violence. As noted previously, a relatively large proportion of Cleveland’s Hispanics (32.6%) subsist under the poverty level, as compared with non-Hispanic whites (16.6%). In addition, 6 of the study’s 26 (23.1%) Puerto Rican respondents reported an annual household income of $10,000 or less. Accordingly, participants’ observations that finances may prompt partner violence may reflect stress
that the respondents are experiencing on a personal level or knowledge that respondents have of others’ circumstances. Four of the 7 individuals, or slightly more than 50%, who offered finances as an explanation were born in Puerto Rico. These individuals may have experienced particularly difficult situations economically in view of the economic transformations within Puerto Rico and possibly economic difficulties encountered upon arriving to the mainland.

*Infidelity*

Five Puerto Rican women (31.3%) and 8 Puerto Rican men, constituting 50.0% of the Puerto Rican participants, offered infidelity as an explanation for the conflict depicted in the scenarios. Infidelity was rarely used to explain only yelling. Rather, it was utilized as an explanation for more serious actions, such as hitting or stabbing. Typical comments appear below.

Maybe she found out that he was shacking up with somebody. She could have found a phone number in his pocket and she could have questioned him so she took it in her hands to approach him first then him coming to her. (Participant #102, a Puerto Rican female, commenting on why a married woman hit her husband)

She found him with another woman. She saw him, she didn’t say anything, she waited for him to come home and when he came home they had a discussion and she gave it to him...she saw him with another woman but they didn’t see her and she waited for him to come home from work, tranquil and helped him relax and when he was relaxed, and he bathed and ate and like that, then they had a discussion and she gave it to him and then he left for the other woman because she [his wife] wasn’t cleaning the house, was passing time with friends. I see this happening with many people. (Participant #375, a Puerto Rican female, commenting on a scenario involving a married woman who hits her husband, leaving a bruise)

The one kept cheating at him. He ignored it for a long time. He kept it building inside of him instead of leaving or saying something to him. I
think he just let it build it up and his anger built up and they had an argument and he grabbed a knife. (Participant #356, a Puerto Rican female, in response to a scenario involving two men engaged in mutual stabbing with no resulting injury to either)

She was probably cheating on him or something. He got mad and threw something at her. (Participant #368, a Puerto Rican male)

She sees him with another woman and he denies it and she sees him with her own two eyes with another woman. She seen him with another woman and she seen him caressing her, caressing her, like waiting in a car or whatever...um, she confronted him and he kept lying and lying and she just went ballistic on him and decided, so she was cutting up. (Participant #367, a Puerto Rican male, in response to a scenario in which an unmarried woman stabs her male intimate partner)

He was cheating on him and he found out about it. He’s going to fight for what’s rightfully his so, you know, I guess he wants to keep the relationship going and they got into an argument and the next thing you know one picked up the knife and stabbed the other one. (Participant #367, a Puerto Rican male, commenting on why two men engaged in mutual stabbing attempts, leaving one of them injured)

He fell in love with another person. (Participant #376, a Puerto Rican man, on why one man stabbed his male partner, leaving him injured)

Both in the context of historical accounts (Suarez Findlay, 1999) and ethnographic accounts (Bourgois, 1995; Mintz, 1960), infidelity has been a major complaint of women in Puerto Rico and, in fact, has been one of the primary reasons stated for obtaining a divorce. It is possible that participants offered infidelity as an explanation based on their personal experience, on their observations of others in Puerto Rico or on the mainland, regardless of the ethnicity of the individuals who they observed,
Substance Use and Mental Illness

Substance Use

Alcohol and drug use figured prominently as a causal explanation of the partner dynamics depicted in the scenarios. A total of 8 Puerto Rican women (50.0%) and 8 Puerto Rican men (80.0%), or 61.5% of the Puerto Rican participants, implicated substance use as the sole or partial cause of the conflict situations. The relatively high frequency with which participants offered substance use/abuse as an explanation would seem to indicate that these situations may be relatively common, either as a function of personal experience, of witnessing such incidents, or of hearing about their occurrence from others.

As with the reliance on infidelity as an explanation for partner violence, substance use was offered as a possible explanation only for scenarios involving an increased level of violence. None of the respondents suggested substance use as a possible explanation for the scenarios involving yelling, regardless of the sex, marital status, or sexual orientation of the scenario actors or the demographic characteristics of the respondents. Instead, substance use was reserved as an explanation for scenarios involving interaction of a more violent nature, such as throwing objects, hitting, and forced sex. In fact, only 3 of the 16 Puerto Rican respondents who mentioned substance use (2 Puerto Rican women and 1 Puerto Rican man, all born in the mainland United States) associated the throwing of objects with substance use. All others offered substance use as an explanation for scenarios in which an individual hit or stabbed another or forced another to engage in sex.

The following representative comments were offered in response to scenarios in which one or both of the individuals in the scenario hit their partner. It can be seen that
many of the respondents used substance use as an excuse or justification for the physical demonstration of conflict. It may be remembered from Chapter 7 that the assaultive partner may attempt to ameliorate the circumstances or effectuate a cure by offering an account. That account may take the form of denial, forgetting, exclusion and inclusion, minimization, removal of the self and intention, excuses, justifications, confessions, or a combination of these. (See Chapter 7 for additional detail.) The respondents' offering of accounts is consistent with the premise that actors will offer accounts to explain behavior that might otherwise not be acceptable. However, in these instances it is not the actor offering the excuse or justification but, in essence, the study participant-as-observer. The participants' willingness to offer excuses and justifications for the behavior, such as hitting or stabbing, may signify their unwillingness to view the behavior as deviant and/or unaccepteble.

Maybe she was on drugs. (Participant #101, a Puerto Rican female; excuse)

Drinking or drugs usually makes things worse. It enhances the way we think and it certainly distorts the way we think and causes violent behavior and people do and think things that they normally wouldn't. That's your artificial courage. Sometimes it gives you a false courage, a false strength, an adrenaline and people will feel like they're stronger even if it's momentarily...you react differently, you know. (Participant #369, a Puerto Rican female; no excuse or justification)

It's assault. I will not, a man should not hit a woman, you know. Alcohol, drugs involved or something. (Participant #102, a Puerto Rican male. Note that no excuse or justification was offered.)

In response to situation involving either stabbing by one or both partners or forced sex, respondents offered the following representative remarks, which were frequently excuses or justifications.

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They’re both drug users. Possibly they could be drug users, maybe one had more dope than the other. I mean, I’ve seen it done. Or they could just be drunk. See to me, I pertain a lot of things to alcohol and drugs because I’ve seen so much violence with the alcohol and drugs. I never really seen an argument or fight that didn’t have to do with alcohol and drugs but I know it’s out there, you know what I’m saying. (Participant #101, a Puerto Rican female)

This happened because he sells drugs and she wants first a tranquil man, but he is driven by ambition, money, for drugs he does it. He leaves what is good. She does not use drugs but he sells them. (Participant #375, Puerto Rican female)

She probably started it. She probably asked him for money or something. He probably used it on drugs or something and he didn’t have the money and they started fighting. It happens in my house. My girlfriend’s father, he’ll go out and get drunk and then when he comes home, her mom be arguing with him because he don’t have no money and they get into a big ass fight. (Participant #368, a Puerto Rican male)

Mental Illness

Only 6 of the 26 Puerto Rican respondents (23.1%) indicated in any way that the depicted conflict could be attributable in whole or in part to mental illness. (See Table 6.) Of those who did raise this issue, 5 were Puerto Rican women and 1 was a Puerto Rican man. Statements included the following.

He told her she was fat and that she should lose some weight...she is a little psycho. (Participant #356, a Puerto Rican female, explaining why a woman stabbed her husband)

This is the intention to kill, because if you stab like that, without doing something, that is the intention to kill. This woman is crazy. She needs to see a psychiatrist, to see someone. At best, she has lost her mind (“se fue la mente”). (Participant #360, a Puerto Rican female, explaining why an unmarried woman stabbed her male partner)

At times when I am depressed I want to see blood, you understand. I am now with you, I can attack you, and then you ask why does this girl attack me, but at times, these things happen to me. I have a desire to go there, to that part of my personality because I do not have control of my whole

224
mind. (Participant #369, a Puerto Rican female, explaining why a woman in the scenario stabbed her male partner. This woman had a history of violence towards others.)

He was liking him and, uh, he wanted to have sex with him and he wouldn’t do it. That's kind of like rape. Yeah, that’s rape. He’s probably sick, sick in the head or something. (Participant #368, a Puerto Rican male, explaining why a man forced his male partner to have sex)

**Individual Characteristics**

Eight of 16 Puerto Rican women (50.0%) and 3 of 10 Puerto Rican men (30.0%), or 42.3% of the Puerto Rican study participants, explained partner conflict with reference to individual characteristics. The characteristics identified were jealousy, insecurity, and a need for power and control. Often, participants referred to more than one of these characteristics concurrently.

*Jealousy*

The following excerpts are representative of comments relating to jealousy.

She wants to go out. He doesn’t want her to go out. She wants to go out with the girls, he tells her no. And they start arguing and she wants to wear something nice and flimsy, you know how the girls get together, and uh, he’s jealous and she gets wild like any hot blooded Puerto Rican woman. (Participant #101, a Puerto Rican female, explaining why an unmarried woman threw something at her male partner)

He could be jealous. He found her well made up, well-arranged (“bien pintaita, bien arregalita”) and it made him jealous. The men that are alive and the woman is in the house and he finds her well made-up, they believe that she is taking him for a fool, and that is how they live the jealous ones, like this. It is like this they become jealous and one hits the other. (Participant #360, a Puerto Rican female, in response to a scenario in which an unmarried man hits and bruises his female partner)

Many times they are jealous, I think, 75%...sometimes they are jealous and all the problems come from that. (Participant #350, a Puerto Rican male, commenting on why a married woman threw something at her husband)
Mintz 1960) had posited that sex and violence were often intertwined, as indicated in Taso’s wife’s recounting of her attempt to lay in wait for Taso and the woman who she supposed was his lover. Like infidelity, the identification of jealousy is consistent with the evolutionary psychological perspective and the interactive gender role strain/conflict paradigm.

Jealousy was also offered as an explanation for same-sex violence, as indicated by the following excerpts from interviews. The following excerpts exemplify responses offered to scenarios involving same-sex conflicts.

No one is hurt. One is in love with someone else and the other one realizes it and for this reason they are at war (“estan en guerra”). It is for jealousy. (Participant #360, a Puerto Rican female, responding to a scenario involving two women engaged in mutual throwing)

‘Cause he got hit and he got bruised. ..Jealousy or unsecure. (Participant #102, a Puerto Rican male, explaining why two men were engaged in mutual hitting, leaving one of them bruised)

Like infidelity, however, the evolutionary psychological perspective is inadequate as an explanatory model because it fails to address situations involving same-sex relationships, which do not generally offer reproductive possibilities.

Insecurity

Insecurity may be expressed as jealousy, as indicated above, or through attempts to control and dominate the partner. Only one Puerto Rican respondent recognized the possible relationship between insecurity and violence, stating, “Insecure. Power and control” (Participant #418, a Puerto Rican female, explaining why a man forced his male partner to have sex).
The identification of insecurity as a cause of partner aggression is most consistent with the interactive gender role strain/conflict paradigm if the batterer is a male, regardless of whether the target is a male or a female. It is not, however, sufficiently broad to encompass situations involving female aggression toward a male or a female intimate. In fact, the only theories that potentially address these instances are those that focus on issues related to power and control as a key element within the dyadic relationship.

Power and Control

The use of violence to gain power and control in a relationship was most frequently mentioned in response to situations involving male aggression against female intimates. Upon initial examination of these responses, it would appear that patriarchy theory, which specifically emphasizes men’s use of wife assault as a form of domination and social control of women, is indeed adequate to explain the violence. The following responses are representative.

They are not married so he feels that he has to do that to control her to him to keep her. You know, she is timid and she really likes him so he sort of have that control over her by yelling at her, making her feel smaller than she is. So he said things to make her feel like she need him and she is not going to be with anybody else, that no one else will want her, so forces by having that control he feels that he can keep her there that, you know, she needs him. (Participant #356, female, in response to a scenario in which a man throws something at his wife)

It could be he’s trying to control her, he may not understand about masculinity, he may have been abused and is abusing. (Participant #418, female, in response to a scenario in which a man forces his wife to have sex)
However, study participants also offered a need for power and control as an explanation for hostility by a female toward her male intimate, as indicated by the following:

She does that because she feels she has to. She feels that she has to control him and by yelling at him and keeping him under her in a sense she has a superior part of the role of the relationship and she is always going to keep him where she wants him. So it could be for anything, no matter what he does it wrong and she has to yell at him, she always got to correct him. (Participant #356, a Puerto Rican female, responding to a scenario in which a married woman yells at her husband)

She’s trying to mold him in a different way, trying to make him do everything that she wants to do. (Participant #367, a Puerto Rican male, explaining why a woman hit her husband, leaving a bruise)

In such instances, the identification of a need for power as a factor in the violence is most consistent with the theory of marital power, which focuses on the characteristics of each individual in the relationship and the dynamic between them. This theory posits that partners who feel that they lack power—consisting of assets and resources, interactional techniques, and/or decisionmaking control—will be more likely to abuse their intimates. This conceptualization permits an explanation of not only male aggression against female partners, but also female aggression toward male intimates and aggression within same-sex intimate relationships. Three of the Puerto Rican participants focused on the issue of power and control in the context of a same-sex relationship.

She definitely wanted control. (Participant #103, a Puerto Rican female, in response to a scenario in which a woman stabbed her female partner.

The one feels trap in the relationship and he can’t leave and he doesn’t really want to have a relationship, a sexual relationship with the other one and the other one controls him and knows that him is in that situation and takes advantages of it and feel power by forcing himself sexually. (Participant #356, a Puerto Rican female, explaining why a man forced his male partner to have sex)
She hit her; that’s abuse. Even pushing someone is abuse. She’s not getting what she wants, like more money. You have to have money to do most anything. It’s a power thing, a control thing. (Participant #418, a Puerto Rican woman, explaining why a woman hit her female partner, resulting in a bruise.

Insecure. Power and control. They may have done alcohol or drugs. It doesn’t matter if it’s a heterosexual relationship or a gay relationship or a lesbian relationship. (Participant #418, explaining why a man forced his male partner to have sex)

Other Themes

Violence and Sex

Three of the 26 Puerto Rican respondents (11.5%) believed that the partners depicted in the scenarios presented engaged in violence as a prelude to lovemaking. This includes 2 of 16 Puerto Rican women (12.5%) and 1 of 10 Puerto Rican men (10.0%). Comments were as follows.

She tortures her and then they will make love. Many people do this and then make love. Because this is passion. There are different classes of love. They pull each other’s hair, they scratch, they squeeze, they tear each others eyes and then they make love. They say that that is the best love that there is. It is love. First they torture each other and then they make love. (Participant #360, a Puerto Rican female, in response to a scenario in which a female hits her female partner)

First they fight and then comes intimacy and then they forget. I know many cases like this. The man hits, he punches, he hurts, but not spiritually because there is love and then at night there they are. I cannot do this because if I hit my husband now, how can I go to bed with him, I can’t, but I know many cases like that. They have no respect for each other. There are women who like this, to prepare for love. I tell you, there is a girl at work, look, I tell you this because it is confidential, I was talking, you cannot say...my daughter works with a woman, they are companions from work, there is this woman, but my daughter tells me she has a man or something, the intimate things are reserved because what they say is ugly, but for me this is a very personal thing, she says, she says that there is a girl that says she like this before she sleeps with a man and it is like life, times have changed...I don’t think it happens often but it
happens. (Participant #369, a Puerto Rican female, explaining why a married couple engaged in mutual hitting)

Well, ‘cause Joe liked it or something. You know, there are some people like that. Like they like getting hit when they’re having sex and stuff. Yeah, on Jerry Springer they got case like that. You know, Jerry Springer show, they asked them that and I could hear what they had to say. That’s crazy. I wouldn’t like no one to hit me while I’m having sex. (Participant #368, a Puerto Rican male, explaining why a man forced his male partner to have sex)

It is not known from the interviews why these participants believed that violence is a precursor to sexual relations. Further inquiry would be needed to assess this.

Sexual Orientation

Four of the 26 Puerto Rican participants (15.4%) used the opportunity to offer their perceptions of homosexuals and homosexual and lesbian relationships. These respondents included 3 Puerto Rican females (18.8%) and 1 Puerto Rican male (10.0%). Responses ranged from being sympathetic to individuals’ difficulties to expressions of disgust. The following comment reflects a level of understanding or sympathy:

Men make, gay men, make more passes than women do. So they get high and they’re both drunk and they’re accusing each other and they start fighting and somebody picks up an object and the other one sees one picking one up and one doesn’t get stabbed, the other one does. Well, a, a lot of gay men are like that. They’re like flirts. ..They may be hiding it. ‘Cause a lot of gay men, especially boys, don’t tell their families because they’re ashamed. I think it’s easy for a girl to tell her mother that she’s a lesbian. I do because a father always wants their sons to be macho. When a father wants a first child, they want a boy, a boy, I mean and he turns out, that lets his father down. There’s a lot of kids that are gay, basically, and they run away because they feel they let their fathers down. The father wants the son to take after him, you know. Like, say my husband’s a construction worker, all burly guy, and he has a construction business and he wants his son to follow in his footsteps. His son don’t want to do that. His son is into flowers. Very feminine. The father is embarrassed and the child resents that which is not good because that is his son, he
brought him into this world regardless of how he came out, that boy may have a certain amount of female genes, you just can't change that. I mean, a lot of fathers, they turn their kids away, you know, even though the mother knows the child is gay, she won't even bring it up to the father because then it's going to be a big conflict, you know. A father's, I mean, their first born, they want it to be a boy, you know, a boy, you know, a boy, you dig the ditches. (Participant #101, female, in response to a scenario involving two men stabbing each other, with a resulting injury to one)

This comment evidenced understanding of the response that some men may have to the news that their son is homosexual and the expectations placed on a child by his father because of his sex. Other comments, however, reflect somewhat stereotypic understandings of same-sex partnerships.

I have this picture that two women are more gentle with each other. (Participant #351, female, commenting on a scenario involving two women stabbing each other, where one is hurt)

I have heard that homosexuals are more violent. (Participant #401, female, commenting on a scenario involving two men and a mutual stabbing)

I have seen in many cases where the lover is hidden and she doesn't want other people to know who she is but the other one wants all the world to know that you are with me and that we are who we are but she is feeling ashamed or is afraid and many times this ends in tragedy. (Participant #350, a male, responding to a scenario involving two women in which one is hitting the other, resulting in injury)

DECIDING WHAT TO DO

As indicated, three primary strategies for addressing partner violence emerged from the participants' responses: leaving and/or terminating the relationship, calling the police, and seeking counseling. Other major themes were help-seeking from other sources and retaliation. Many participants suggested multiple strategies for resolving particular situations, sometimes to be utilized simultaneously and sometimes to be utilized in sequence, after a previous one failed to accomplish its intended purpose.
Leaving the Relationship

Leaving or terminating the relationship, such as in divorce, was volunteered as a solution to partner conflict by 9 of 16 Puerto Rican women (56.3%) and 2 of 10 Puerto Rican men (20.0%), or 42.3% of the Puerto Rican men and women interviewed. The excerpts below are representative.

Yeah, she could leave. Well, in some cases, for that, she’d have to press charges. And if she don’t and then if she puts him out and then takes him back, then she’s asking for it. ‘Cause she knows what he’s capable of doing. Now if he did it once and missed next time he might not miss. It could be worse, she could be buried in her own rose garden. (Participant #101, a Puerto Rican female, explaining what a married woman should do in response to her husband throwing something)

She should leave the situation permanently. (Participant #418, a Puerto Rican woman, explaining what a woman should do immediately after being hit and bruised by her husband)

He can leave her. (Participant #356, a Puerto Rican woman, explaining to choice open to a husband whose wife yelled at him)

They should separate because she aggravates him a lot. (Participant # 360, a Puerto Rican woman, explaining what a couple should do after a husband hit his wife)

After that happen, I call the police and, um, he obviously needs counseling. I think that that is what should be done, that she should leave him. I honestly think that in that situation that she should never live with him again after something like that happened because I don’t know how you can trust someone after something like that happen so I would be, I think, that she should not be with somebody like that ever again, even if he did get counseling. (Participant #356, a woman, explaining what a woman should do in response to her husband’s attempt to stab her)

In my case, I might just leave. (Participant #368, a Puerto Rican male, explaining what he would do if he were the man in the scenario who had just thrown something at his wife)

She calls the police. They take him. They should divorce because they can’t live together. (Participant #379, a Puerto Rican male, explaining the sequence of consequences that he believed should occur after the man threw something at his wife)
Walk away and go their own way. (Participant #102, a Puerto Rican male, explaining what two men should do after having engaged in mutual stabbing attempts)

Previous research, discussed in chapter 7, indicates that leaving a relationship is a major strategy in dealing with partner violence. As indicated by these representative excerpts, leaving the relationship was suggested as a response to more serious conflict situations involving heightened aggression, such as hitting or stabbing. It was not offered as a solution to situations involving yelling. This may reflect a recognition of the seriousness of the action of leaving and a desire for proportionality between the provocation and the response of the assaulted partner. However, the interviews did not ask participants to explain why they would choose one solution over another, but asked instead only to indicate what should be done and why. Accordingly, additional research would be necessary to understand better the underlying reasons.

Calling the Police

Help-seeking from the police was offered as a solution by 7 of 16 Puerto Rican women (43.8%) and 3 of 10 Puerto Rican men (30.0%) (38.5% of the Puerto Rican sample). (See Table 6). The following comments were representative.

Call the police and put him in prison. (Participant #360, a Puerto Rican female, explaining the course of action to be followed by an unmarried woman after her male partner hits her)

She should call the police. It should be documented because the person may go on and victimize other people or has done it in the past. (Participant #418, a Puerto Rican female, explaining what a woman should do after she is forced by her female partner to have sex)

He should call the police and press charges on her. (Participant #351 in response to a scenario involving a woman who hits her husband)
She should go to the police. He raped her, it's rape. (Participant #403, advising on the action to be taken by a married woman who is forced by her husband to have sexual relations)

Call the police...she should turn him in. Cause otherwise that's like rape, you know, that's like having sex with me if I don't want it I force you to have it. (Participant #102, a Puerto Rican male, explaining what an unmarried woman should do after her male partner forces her to have sex)

She calls the police. They take him. (Participant #379, a Puerto Rican male, commenting on the sequence of events that will follow after a married man throws something at his wife)

Separation and, uh, that needs to be, uh, totally monitored by the courts and other agencies, probably affiliated. Somebody needs to make a report. (Participant #106, in response to a scenario involving an unmarried woman who stabs her male partner)

It is not surprising that less than half of the respondents did not volunteer calling the police as a potential remedy. Previous research has found that relatively few incidents of partner violence are ever reported to the police (Bachman, 1994; Schulman, 1981; Kantor and Straus, 1990). Factors predictive of seeking police assistance, such as abuse over a longer period of time, lower levels of education, and lower occupational status, were not incorporated into the scenarios that were presented, so it is unknown whether a greater number of respondents would have recommended police assistance if these factors were present. More than half of the participants (19 of 26) had no education beyond high school and only 2 of 26 could be classified as professionals; it is not known whether these demographic characteristics were associated with the frequency with which respondents suggested recourse to the police.

One participant commented on the realization that police might have about the lack of change in a woman’s situation if they have been to the same address several times
in response to calls for help. However, although the participant recognized that this pattern might occur, she did not appear to have any insight as to why.

First of all I'd call the police. And I'd make a report. He hit her. She should call the police and make a report because and too, see, that's another thing about women I don't understand. A lot of women makes reports and they want to prosecute and put them in jail but then they don't go to counseling and then they let them back in and then it happens again. They're scared. Like my mother. A lot of husbands make threats, you know, oh, I'll kill you. But if I was her, I'd call the police because once you let the police know if it happens again, I'd report it and if someone finds you. I mean you go through it again, I mean why the hell didn't she do it the first time? You know and then a lot of police I notice they get tired of that when you call wolf after the husband and that what did she think she had to get to call us and then we realize we been here 3 or 4 times and she don't do nothin'. (Participant #101, a Puerto Rican female, explaining what would happen if a woman who is hit and bruised by her male partner calls the police for assistance)

Counseling

Counseling was offered as a solution by a total of 8 of 16 Puerto Rican women (50.0%) and 8 of 10 Puerto Rican men (80.0%), or 61.5% of the Puerto Rican sample. (See Table 6.) Participants sometimes specified a particular source of the counseling, such as a psychologist or clergy member. Most often, they simply suggested counseling without specifying the nature of the counseling or a source. The following excerpts are representative.

Counseling, with no specification as to source:

Maybe they're still learning how to communicate. But if it gets out of hand I'd advise counseling. (Participant #101, a Puerto Rican female, commenting on two women who are yelling at each other)

Not the one that cheat, the other one, should leave the relationship because he continuously do it. He most likely goes to continue to do it and that what he wants to do, he is cheating on him. After that he should go and seek counseling to know why he stay in that relationship for so long and that to let himself go through all that when he knew that was going on,
why he stay in that relationship for so long, why he accept all that, you know, because I was in love, but you have to love yourself more than that. (Participant #356, a Puerto Rican female, on what a man should do after he and his male partner engage in mutual stabbing attempts and he is injured)

The problem is on both sides. They must come to an understanding between themselves, they must look for professional help. (Participant #350, a Puerto Rican male, responding to a scenario involving mutual stabbing attempts between a husband and a wife, resulting in injury to the wife)

*Counseling from a specified source:*

This woman is crazy, she needs to see a psychiatrist, to see someone. (Participant # 360, a Puerto Rican female, in response to a scenario in which a woman stabs her husband)

Go to a drug rehab or something, go to AA or something. (Participant # 368, a Puerto Rican male, on what should be done after a husband hits his wife)

It is unlikely that the responses suggesting counseling as a solution reflect an occupational bias. Only 1 of the individuals offering counseling was herself a professional counselor. Nine of the Puerto Rican respondents, or almost one-third of the Puerto Rican sample, however, were recruited from counseling sources or substance use programs (see Table 4). It is possible that a bias in favor of counseling may have existed due to individuals' awareness of this option and/or a positive experience with counseling themselves. However, all 9 individuals did not suggest counseling and counseling was suggested by individuals who had not been recruited from such sources and who did not indicate in their interviews that they had had any experience with the counseling process.
Other Strategies

Additional strategies that were suggested included help-seeking through mechanisms other than the police or counseling, talking with each other, retaliation, and “conversion.”

Help-Seeking

A total of 2 men and 2 women from the Puerto Rican sample suggested seeking assistance from sources other than the police and counselors. These sources included hospitals and shelters. These sources were often suggested in conjunction with other options that could be utilized.

Shelter:

I’d recommend counseling, marriage counseling or even go to a shelter if it continues, a shelter for battered women but, um, I wouldn’t go on right away with him. I think I’d go for maybe a while, not just go to the hospital, but stay away, go to a shelter. (Participant #101, a Puerto Rican female, responding to a scenario involving mutual stabbing of a husband and wife)

She should leave the situation permanently. She should go get help till she’s safe, to a neighbor or a shelter. (Participant #418, a Puerto Rican female, on what should be done after a married man hits his wife)

Hospital:

They call an ambulance and take it to the hospital. (Participant #379, a Puerto Rican male, on the stabbing of a man by his wife)

As seen from the above, participants did not often mention medical professionals as either a source of assistance generally or as a source of counseling specifically. Previous research has found that health practitioners tend to be the least helpful of professionals contacted to assist with situations involving partner violence (Brendtro and
Bowker, 1989) and that women who have initially sought their services may refrain from returning due to previous negative responses (cf. Websdale, 1998). This study did not question respondents about their interactions with health care professionals in any context, so it is unknown whether previous negative experiences may have influenced responses.

A total of 2 Puerto Rican participants were recruited to this study from clinics and hospitals. However, none of these individuals were among those who suggested assistance from hospitals. None of the Puerto Rican participants offering a shelter as a possible solution had been recruited from shelters. One of the Puerto Rican respondents indicating that a shelter was an option had heard about shelters for battered women in her church.

Talking About It

Not surprisingly, the same individuals who suggested counseling also suggested that individuals talk about the situation, sometimes before proceeding to counseling or attempting other strategies. Representative examples of this suggestion are as follows.

They should sit down and talk about it. This is the way I think, see. You just have to do that, sit and talk about it so I think that what should be done is sit down and communicate. Ask from help from counseling. (Participant #101, a Puerto Rican female, responding to a scenario in which a man throws something at his wife)

If she really cares about him, she could talk to him and said you know you are doing this and this and this and I am not sure what reasons for...you are just pushing me away. (Participant #356, a Puerto Rican female, discussing what should be done when an unmarried man yells at his female partner)

If it’s a good, strong bonded relationship and something stupid, that’s why they hit each other or threw each other, he, they can work at it and
you know go their own ways until they realize that they can come back
and talk, you know, straighten it out that way, but if it’s not to be they’ll
both go their different ways. (Participant #102, a Puerto Rican male,
suggesting a course of action for two men engaged in mutual hitting)

They must communicate. (Participant #350, a Puerto Rican male, in
response to a scenario involving an unmarried woman hitting her male
partner)

Unlike counseling, which was suggested in response to even severe violence such
as unilateral or mutual stabbing, talking with each other was suggested only in situations
involving unilateral or mutual yelling, throwing, or hitting. One participant explained in
response to a couple throwing:

They should basically talk because it’s not really dramatic now. Then
maybe some kind of counseling because, you see, you gotta go to
somebody that’s going to be objective. So you gotta go to somebody
that’s going to be optimistic, that’s going to tell you the real deal, not
somebody that’s going to tell me what I want to hear. (Participant #101, a
Puerto Rican female).

Retaliation

Retaliation was volunteered as an appropriate response to partner aggression by only 1
Puerto Rican woman (6.3%) and no Puerto Rican men (0.0%), a total of 3.9% of the
Puerto Ricans. Participant #101, a Puerto Rican female, stated in response to a scenario
in which a man forces his female partner to have sex, “He’s a rapist. I’d beat him over
the head with a bat.” It is noteworthy that, despite the empirical research suggesting that
violence may be more acceptable as a response among Puerto Ricans, only 1 of 26 Puerto
Rican respondents suggested retaliation as a possible course of action.

239

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Conversion

Two individuals suggested in response to situations involving same-sex couples that the remedy to the violence was conversion to heterosexuality. In both instances, the respondents, one a male and one a female, were Puerto Rican. Both were born in Puerto Rico. Participant #376 indicated that he was a Seventh Day Adventist, while Participant #365 practices the Pentecostal faith. Accordingly, their perspectives may reflect their religious teachings more than any cultural perspective.

They must convert the men and leave homosexuality because it makes them sick. I say that they are men but it is like a sickness. I don’t know how many gays are gays because they were violated during their childhood and if you took them to a psychologist, to medical people who could, that also there are hormones that develop more than others that make them like this, it is not that they want to be like this but there are others that like it, this is true. The only thing I can say is to look for two women and leave them. (Participant #365, female, in response to two men involved in mutual hitting)

He wants to end this situation, this relationship. He doesn’t want this class of pareja and he feels a little ashamed and wants to end the relationship. The best thing is to separate completely and each one can think about it and ask for help or counsel about leaving this life and make a happy life with his pareja. Not to be homosexual any more because this will bring them serious problems in the future (No ser mas homosexual porque eso le va a traer graves problemas en el futuro) They can be sick from these relationships. It (a relationship) will last for six or seven months and then they continue with another relationship and follow from one relationship to another relationship and that is not something pleasant and it causes prejudice from society. He must make the decision to abandon this place. (Participant #376, male, in response to a scenario in which a man is stabbed by his male partner)

Both of these perspectives reflect the belief that homosexuality is mutable, a matter of choice, and a less than desirable, if not blatantly deviant, condition.
SUMMARY

Both male and female Puerto Rican respondents provided similar explanations for the cause of partner violence depicted in the scenarios. It is important to note that the participants offered explanations for the cause of the violence; they did not choose their responses from a preformulated list of possible explanations of the depicted violence. In addition, all participants offered a variety of explanations for the cause of the conflict; no participants indicated a single causal explanation for all instances of conflict. Respondents often linked their response regarding the postulated cause to the level of violence that was depicted in the vignette. For instance, arguments over children could account for throwing and pushing, but more serious violence, such as stabbing and forced sex, were explained with reference to circumstances such as mental illness and substance use. Although this study was not designed to test a specific theory of partner violence, the breadth of responses from the respondents would seem to support multifactoral theories that encompass variables on multiple levels, such as the individual, the familial, and the systemic.

It is interesting to note that approximately the same proportions of men and women identified sex-associated behavior (women, 31.3%; men, 40.0%) and gender-associated behavior (women, 62.5%; men, 50.0%) as being the cause of the depicted conflict. This would seem to indicate that the interpretation of specific behaviors by men and women within the specific cultural context may be similar. It does not, however, imply that responses to the situations depicted would necessarily be similar. For instance, there are large differences in the proportions of men and women who recommended leaving the relationship (women, 56.3%; men, 20.0%), counseling
(women, 50.0%; men, 80.0%), and talking about it (women, 50.0%; men, 80.0%) as potential solutions. These findings are somewhat counterintuitive in view of existing literature indicating that the role of women in Puerto Rican society is to nurture and maintain the family unit regardless of their personal desires. Six of the 9 women who recommended that the victim in the scenario leave the relationship were born in the United States and both of the men who suggested leaving were also born in the United States. These findings suggest that these respondents may not adhere to values and roles for women that might be considered more traditional. In addition, divorce may be more easily obtainable on the mainland and less stigmatizing than it is in Puerto Rico, thereby facilitating departure from an abusive relationship.

It is also somewhat surprising that a much larger proportion of the male respondents (80.0%) than the female respondents (50.0%) suggested counseling or talking about it as a possible means to resolve the depicted conflict. Counseling and talking represent fairly “modern” solutions to conflict resolution. The more negative attributes associated with machismo, for instance, would lead one to postulate that the men would adopt a “devil may care” attitude or attempt to persuade the woman to remain through verbal or physical persuasion. Several possible explanations exist for this finding. One half (50.0%) of the men who suggested counseling or talking were born in the United States. Consequently, they may have had significant exposure to the concept of counseling and negotiation through television, public service advertisements, and contact with individuals who had undergone counseling. It is also possible, however, that many of the 8 men who recommended counseling and talking have integrated the positive
qualities associated with **machismo** and **familismo**, so that the maintenance of the family unit, and actions designed to preserve the family unit, become paramount in importance.

The greatest differences between those of the male and female respondents can be seen with the explanations of finances (women, 12.5%; men, 50.0%), infidelity (women, 31.3%; men, 80.0%), and substance use (women 50.0%; men, 80.0%). The reasons for this variation are unclear, but several possibilities exist.

One possibility is that men and women may be more sensitized to issues that bear on them more directly and these issues differ between men and women. As an example, a much larger percentage of the men attributed conflict to finances than did the women. This may reflect their own past or current economic situation, their familiarity with the financial situation of friends or family members, their knowledge of the economic status of Puerto Ricans in Cuyahoga County and/or Puerto Rico, and/or concern with the economy in general. However, the difference in the proportion offering finances as an explanation may also reflect differences in their socialization. For instance, men may be more sensitive to issues of finances because of the culturally imposed, and perhaps internally integrated, mandate that a man provide support for his family. A similar mechanism may be operating with respect to the large differences in the proportion of men and women identifying infidelity and substance use as possible causes. If, indeed, the socialization process to become “masculine” includes an emphasis on sexual experience and alcohol use, men may be more likely to identify these issues as sources of conflict.
CHAPTER ELEVEN
THE NON-HISPANIC WHITE SAMPLE

IDENTIFYING THE CAUSE OF PARTNER VIOLENCE

Sex- and Gender-Associated Behaviors

Sex-Associated Behaviors

A total of 3 of 10 non-Hispanic white women (30.0%) and 1 of 9 non-Hispanic white men (11.1%) (21.1% of the non-Hispanic white sample) identified sex-associated behaviors as a possible cause of partner violence. (See Table 7 below.)

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<td>9 47.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retaliation</td>
<td>1 10.0</td>
<td>2 22.2</td>
<td>3 15.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conversion</td>
<td>0 0.0</td>
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<td>0 0.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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*Participants provided multiple responses.
Interestingly, one man, in particular, offered explanations for male behavior that appear to reflect the underlying assumptions of the evolutionary theory of violence: males are more aggressive than females. Additionally, his responses reflect what may be an underlying and unspoken premise of the biological theories: that behavior essentially consists of predetermined or biologically programmed responses to particular events, with little individual ability to mediate those responses. Participant #105, a non-Hispanic white male, responded to a situation involving a married man and woman engaged in mutual hitting:

There’s 2 to 3 women for every man, so he’s got choices so but, uh, that’s very down the line, man has never been monogamous, women have been and that’s part of our biological make-up and part of the social make-up. A man, the more pants he can get into, the happier he is.

He continued,

You hear more about it and how many times, I know, personally, you walk out, he gets his butt kicked all the time by his wife but he won’t report her. His machismo. And the only reason he told me is because we are really close friends and I’m not gonna make fun of him over it...All male animals have it [machismo]. Yes. Lions have it. It’s just the male thing. The only difference is between animals and us, uh, there’s almost the same amount of males as there is females in human race while in all other animals in males there’s there’s less males than there is females. So that’s why we don’t go out there but there isn’t as many females to choose as to fight over in the animal kingdom and that’s I think been inbred in us for probably well over 4 million years as long as our ancestors, human ancestors all the way up to now. We are animals and anybody that says we’re not is a fool. We are animals...And Mother Nature still has control over us. No matter what and I think that probably was less violence when we used our instinct more and then when we start using our intellect. Because most of the animal kingdoms the male does not really get violent towards the female...I think the worst animal on this planet is us. We’re the only ones who kill each other and pollute everything we touch, maybe ourselves and ourselves the world around us...
This perspective was somewhat echoed by other participants in their responses. Participant #363, a non-Hispanic white female, also relied on biology to explain why an unmarried man would force his female partner to have sex: "They [men] think they have the urge to have sex." In essence, biology serves to excuse or justify the violent behavior.

**Gender-Associated Behaviors**

Three of 10 non-Hispanic white women (30.0% of the subgroup) and 1 of 9 non-Hispanic white males (11.1% of the subgroup), representing 21.1% of the non-Hispanic white sample, attributed the behavior in question, such as hitting, stabbing, or yelling to behaviors or violations of behavioral expectations that are usually associated with a particular gender, sometimes within a specific culture. (See Table 7.) Of the 4 non-Hispanic white respondents offering this explanation, 1 self-identified as Roman Catholic, 1 as Baptist, and 2 as Christian, unspecified.

For instance, Participant #421, a non-Hispanic white female stated in response to a scenario involving a married man and woman in which he yells:

> Maybe she didn’t clean or she didn’t pick up the kids or something family-related and she’s not happy with her performance that way.

In yet another scenario involving a man and woman who are not married where there was mutual hitting without any resulting injury, she offered:

> Someone started an argument. She didn’t wash his good shirt that he needed or he didn’t cook dinner and she was running late and everything wasn’t done and they just starting arguing and one thing led to another and they started beating on each other and he got hurt.

Too, participants used the scenario as a springboard to expand on their views of men and/or women and particular groups of people, as well as relationships. These
responses portrayed men, women, and/or members of other groups as possessing certain intrinsic characteristics by virtue of their membership in that group. Consider the following responses that generalize from the particular setting of the scenario to larger groups or classifications of people.

Participant #363, a non-Hispanic white female

Scenario: Two women; mutual stabbing; one hurt

Response: The night before she followed her and found her with another woman and got jealous and she, you know, they confronted each other or the one confronted her and she was trying to deny it and she just got aggravated and she, like, she plays the male role, the one that stabbed the person. I think men do it too because I’ve known like 2 gay people, they’re really cool people but they’re not my type of people and actually the one that plays the male role was really, really hot, just made me sick.

Participant #403, a non-Hispanic white female

Scenario: Two women; one hits the other, leaving a dark bruise

Response: I believe men tend to be worse, the abuser most men... You know it really does all depend on the guy. It’s not from where he’s from and it is kind of a bit, you know, he was the values that he got.

Participant #105, a non-Hispanic white male, referred to “culture” and the role of men and women numerous times in responding to a variety of scenarios. For instance, in response to a scenario involving a married man and woman who hit each other, resulting in an injury to the man, he commented,

That could also be a sexual part of it, like just their social and ethnic background does create a lot of times physical arguments not just verbal, where they start hitting each other. Like my culture, male is predominately dominant, okay, he is the majority of the time the main breadwinner and everything else and he expects certain things. Like if a woman’s home all day he expects his dinner to be done. Uh, he expects his children to be raised like they’re supposed to be where he puts certain responsibilities on the woman and, uh, he does whatever the man’s job is, there’s like a division and it can get out of hand where either one or the other doesn’t do the job that their social upbringing brings in my social
upbringing, children abuses is also prevalent...I think the guy should at least learn to defend himself if he got hurt by a woman, not that it’s impossible but I don’t think he should at least been able to subdue her to a point where one get hurt or the other.

Surprisingly, he referred to *machismo* in a number of his responses, although he had no apparent connection to Latino culture.

Domestic violence towards men is much higher than people anticipate. The only difference is when a man hits he does more damage than a woman so that’s why men instantly even in a situation where a man is not guilty, uh, police come in, who do they go after, 99.9% of the time the man. *The majority of your Spanish men, they’re not too monogamous. Just machismo, that’s what it is even though I do believe in monogamous relationships,* I don’t believe in cheating unless the other partner like in my first marriage started and then I went and found me another person and I left the person I was with so I might be strange but I do not believe in cheating. Just that tradition, uh, culture, including Hispanic, Italian, European culture, it’s very predominant. There’s more women in our society so a man has more choices.

In yet another scenario, also involving a married couple, but one in which the couple engaged in mutual hitting with no resulting injury, he reasoned,

Women are always told they are, they should be more or less subjugated by man, she gets married, she’s supposed to take care of him and everything and he’s lord and master. It’s changing now tremendously but that was throughout the centuries, so it is still embedded back in the psyche through centuries so women do tolerate much more than men will but there is men that will tolerate a lot of it also. There’s one thing you can take to the grave and only one. That’s honor. It’s honor. Nothing else. So you try to keep it on the honorable side of everything you can. *That is part of machismo, that is part of pride and everything else.* Do the best you can in everything no matter what it costs...Uh, in the protection of your family, if it costs you your life, it costs your life...Uh, always work like you work for yourself even if somebody else pays you. That’s honor, that’s pride, feel good about doing what you’re supposed to do....

He continued to emphasize culture and the violation of gender-associated roles as primary cause of partner violence in his responses to other scenarios. For instance, in
discussing a scenario involving an unmarried man and woman, in which he stabs her but does not cause a physical injury, the participant asserted,

Cause the whole society is leaning towards the matriarch and, uh, female domination and, uh, that's the big problem in today's relationships. It started with the war when women during the war were working in the factories to make money. Then after the war the guys came home, the women still wanted to work because they had money, they had power, they're not going to listen to the husband anymore. The divorce rate went sky high, domestic violence went sky high. Uh, because everybody wants everything. They want to have a half a million dollar house, they want to have hundred thousand dollar cars, furniture and everything else, doing everything and they forget what's their relationship, what's their duty in the relationship. They forget their children, they forget everything that's important in a relationship just for one thing, money and power, and I'm not saying men are wrong, I'm not saying women are wrong, they're both wrong. Me, is a woman's capable, she can do whatever she wants to, she has the rights to. But if she's not, don't take my job if you can't do what I do and take a job just because you're a woman. .. It should be a totally even playing field for jobs and I think it causes a tremendous number of problems today especially where American white male is being stomped upon. It's much easier, the wife was at home, she took care of the house, took care of the children. I think children were raised much more, much better, uh...I think in many situations, not all, women have forgotten the most important job once they become a mother. I think that causes a tremendous amount of problems today because they have forgotten what was their most important job. Yes, there's nothing wrong with a woman wanting to be what she was educated or what she would like to be educated but by nature which is ruler over all of us, once you're a mother, that's your number one priority, I think, at least till the children are in school.

He continued to emphasize characteristics associated with particular roles, even when the two actors in the stated scenarios were of the same sex. In a scenario involving two men and mutual stabbing, with no resulting injury, he explained:

Women have a version of machismo or not, that I don't know, but I think women also get very defensive over their territory. I think to a point women are also very territorial especially where it comes to their spouse or their boyfriend or whatever cause women, the majority of them, like to have one partner...Men by nature are not as much when it comes to that but they will because of their honor, their pride...
In a similar situation involving two women in which one hit the other, leaving a bruise, he commented:

In fact, it doesn’t matter because it’s a lesbian relationship. One thinks, tales more or less like a male role while the other takes female so the one that takes a male role strikes her. ... I think women get, uh, on the average, uh, I think women are more jealous than men...I think part of it is their upbringing, okay, you know, knight on shining armor and all that BS that they’re brought on their fairy tale and, uh, all of a sudden that armor gets tarnished and, uh, I think a lot of times they’re very disappointed at themselves...At themselves and also at their partner. Cause they’re probably saying why the hell did I pay that dummy for? Uh, now I’m stuck with him or time for me to get out of there...And they also, by their nature, women get defensive. In nature mothers defend their offspring. Women just extend that into their husband, that’s their territory...Women always say, hey, I got 2 children, or the 4th one right there. I think it’s like a social-biological combination.

Environmental and Situational Factors

Participants offered three factors to explain partner violence: children, finances, and infidelity. (See Table 7, above.)

Children

Five of the non-Hispanic white men (55.6%) indicated that stress, tension, or disagreements related to childrearing could provoke partner violence. None of the non-Hispanic white women offered this as an explanation. The following interview excerpts are representative of these responses.

Could be maybe disagreeing on the children. [Participant #106, non-Hispanic white male, on why a married couple engaged in mutual stabbing without resulting injury]

Maybe some, somebody’s spent too much money or, um, they have plans and the plans got totally wiped out by something, nothing, somebody not
thinking but, uh, that individual’s ideas or motives for that moment or kids, that’s always a big one, that’s the biggest one between my wife and myself is the children where she defends them where I think they should stand on their own 2 feet and they don’t, though, die. Once you’re over 21, you can’t survive, die...Well, we always argue about her oldest son. In my opinion, he’s a useless hog. [Participant #105, a non-Hispanic white male, on why a married man is yelling at his wife]

Could have been either about money, children.... [Participant #361, a non-Hispanic white male, on why a married man throws something at his wife, without resulting injury]

It is striking that not a single non-Hispanic female of the sample of 10 offered children as an explanation for the violence. Several possible explanations exist: (1) non-Hispanic white women as a group may be unwilling to believe that children could provoke violent confrontation; (2) children are not the cause of conflict in non-Hispanic white women’s relationships; (3) non-Hispanic white women, more so than any other group, find it socially unacceptable to attribute the cause of violence or conflict in a relationship to the children and/or (4) the finding results from characteristics of this specific sample, such as contextual factors related to the geographical location of the sample or the nonrandomness of the sample.

Finances

Disagreements and difficulties surrounding finances were offered as an explanation for partner conflict by 15.8% of the non-Hispanic white participants: 1 non-Hispanic white woman (10.0%) and 2 non-Hispanic white men (22.2%). The excerpts appear below:

Little fights can get out of hand...I just let it all out and he just lets it all out and it all goes back and forth. It just happened last night. I haven’t been to bed yet...it got out of hand...it just went back and forth. The one last night lasted like 2 hours. Um, he buys these moneymaking ordeals off
TV a lot...I call it get rich quick and I get mad that he has all this crap sitting down there and does nothing with it...and he told me I’m the one bringing him down and shut up. It’s not my fault...it was dumb. We hadn’t had a fight in a while so we were about due. Especially if the money is joint. When the money is combined, a lot of things conflict about who has more, who makes more so that means it’s more mine...He’s real old-fashioned that if he doesn’t make more money than I do then he’s not a good provider which I think is stupid. He can think what he wants…I’m not going to rub it in his face or nothing. (Participant #422, a non-Hispanic white woman, responding to a scenario in which a married couple is engaging in mutually hitting, which ultimately results in an injury to the wife)

They probably had money problems because from what I read most fights are about money problems so uh he’s probably out of work and he’s probably getting fed up with her down on his case all the time and if he threw it and didn’t mean to hit and then he probably understands what she’s going through and things but he really threw it out of he doesn’t care, he’s just tired of the nagging and the fussing and fighting all the time. (Participant #362, a non-Hispanic white male, explaining why a married man threw things at his wife)

It could be like a money problem or something like that. (Participant #420, explaining why a married couple is engaging in mutual throwing)

As indicated previously, financial difficulty has been posited to be an underlying factor in partner violence within the context of social learning theory, ecological theory, and the biopsychosocial perspective. It has been identified by empirical research as a risk factor for partner violence. Consequently, it is not surprising that respondents suggest financial problems as a cause.

Infidelity

A total of 5 non-Hispanic white women (50.0%) and 4 non-Hispanic white men (44.4%), representing 47.4% of the non-Hispanic white sample, offered infidelity as an explanation for the occurrence of the depicted partner violence. Infidelity was rarely
used to explain only yelling but served, instead, as an explanation for more serious actions, such as stabbing. Typical comments appear below.

Maybe they were unfaithful. (Participant #103, a non-Hispanic white female, explaining why a married couple tried to stab each other)

He had cheated on me and I had, I always when he went out, he tended to go out to the bar drinking with his buddies on paydays. He'd blow his whole payday. I'd wait all week and then payday would come and he's go out and blow the whole payday on booze and stuff and I was searching his wallet and I found a woman's phone number and he had a hickey on his neck. He went out with a woman and he gave her his sucker, right, and I knew he had cheated on me. (Participant #403, a non-Hispanic white female, explaining why a married man hit his wife)

Maybe she caught him cheating and maybe she wanted the payback time. (Participant #105, a non-Hispanic white male, commenting on why a married woman was stabbing her husband)

Well, she probably saw him drinking at a bar with some lady, okay, and in her mind she put two and two together that they were, uh, he was cheating on her and she probably bottled it up at home and you know him and her kept going back and forth and you know all of a sudden he grabbed an ashtray and threw it at her unless it's a glass ashtray, I would say it might not hurt but a heavy glass she could be hurt with. (Participant #362, a non-Hispanic white male, explaining why an unmarried man threw something at his female partner)

Three of the non-Hispanic white study respondents (15.8%) explained same-sex partner conflict as having arisen from infidelity. The excerpts appear below:

Another woman or man, that's a big one because the way I've seen lesbian couples. (Participant #422, a non-Hispanic white female, explaining why two women were engaged in mutual hitting, with no resulting injury)

Could be cheating. (Participant #105, a non-Hispanic white male, on why two men engaged in mutual stabbing attempts, with no resulting injuries)

Maybe one of the girls found another lover or something like that. (Participant #420, a non-Hispanic white male, responding to a scenario involving two women engaged in mutual stabbing attempts, with no resulting injury)
Reliance on an evolutionary psychological perspective to understand why infidelity could prompt partner violence is most reasonable in the context of opposite-sex relationships, where there exists an issue of reproductive value and the need to protect, although unconsciously, one’s reproductive interests. This argument becomes significantly less viable in the context of same-sex relationships, where there is no such reproductive possibility.

Infidelity as an explanation of same-sex or opposite-sex partner violence is also consistent with the interactive gender role strain/conflict paradigm. Infidelity may confront a man with the possibility of abandonment and threaten him with the exposure and recognition of his own dependency. As a result, pre-existing feelings of anxiety and/or inadequacy may be heightened or exacerbated. The use of violence permits a re-establishment of a man’s positional identity as independent and invulnerable and thereby restores, at least on a temporary basis, his self-perceived masculinity and manhood.

**Substance Use and Mental Illness**

*Substance Use*

Alcohol and drug use were frequently suggested by respondents as a causal explanation of the partner dynamics depicted in the scenarios. Seven non-Hispanic white women and 4 non-Hispanic white men implicated substance use/abuse as the sole or partial cause of the conflict situations. This represents 70.0% of the non-Hispanic white women and 44.4% of the non-Hispanic white men. The relatively high frequency with which participants offered substance use/abuse as an explanation may reflect personal
experience, experience witnessing such incidents, or experience hearing about their occurrence from others.

In contrast to other explanations, where severity did not seem to be a relevant consideration, substance use was offered as a possible explanation only for scenarios involving an increased level of violence. None of the respondents suggested substance use as a possible explanation for the scenarios involving yelling, regardless of the sex, marital status, or sexual orientation of the scenario actors or the demographic characteristics of the respondents. Only 1 of the respondents who mentioned substance use associated the throwing of objects with substance use. All others suggested substance use as an explanation for scenarios in which an individual hit or stabbed another or forced another to engage in sex.

The following comments were offered in response to scenarios in which one or both of the individuals in the scenario hit their partner. Many of the respondents used substance use as an excuse or justification for the physical demonstration of conflict. (See Chapter 7 for additional detail relating to excuse and justifications as forms of accounts.) The respondents' offering of excuses or justifications for the vignette actors' behavior is consistent with the premise that actors will offer accounts to explain behavior that might otherwise not be acceptable. The participants' willingness to offer excuses and justifications for the behavior, such as hitting or stabbing, may signify their unwillingness to view the behavior as deviant and/or unacceptable.

It's still abuse whether a woman doing it to a man or a man doing it to a woman. I have my sister-in-law is that type person where my brother, and I'm not saying he wouldn't hit her because they really have had some doozy fights, but she's the more abusive one than him where she physically abuses him, hits him and bruises him, throws things and bruises him, so it's bad, really bad, people get that way. It is, uh, her problem is
that she smokes a lot of marijuana and if she doesn’t get it, I think it’s more mental than, uh, I don’t know if you can actually get addicted to marijuana, I don’t think so and I never was and I smoked it a lot when I was younger...but I mean she doesn’t get a joint a day it’s like she doesn’t, she isn’t able to survive and she gets grouchy and cross and they tend to argue and she is the abusive one. (Participant #403, a non-Hispanic white female)

It could be that is she was on drugs or alcohol, either or, there are a lot of alcoholics in my family and they tend to be very hostile once they reach a certain point and the littlest things set them off...or it could be that the other one is using drugs and she is trying to explain to her how bad it is, you know how addicting alcohol and stuff like that is and maybe she just doesn’t want to see it and just takes it a little too far and flies off the wall and hits her. (Participant #422, a non-Hispanic white female; excuse)

Maybe they’re drunk or maybe her or him or running around late coming back from bars. Most of the time, let’s say if he came home drunk and her mouth starts running. Bitching at him or whatever. (Participant #105, a non-Hispanic white male; justification)

Alcohol was a big problem in my situation...because after I got angry I drank, uh, so that most of the violence with me anyway is turned inward to me. I don’t like to hurt people. The time I hurt my wife I was sober, I didn’t have a drink but I went into total anger blackout. Maybe they’re drunk or maybe her or him or running around late coming back from bars. Most of the time, let’s say if he came home drunk and her mouth starts running. Bitching at him or whatever. In reality she’s asking for it. When a man is drunk or when a woman is drunk they do not have control of themselves and anybody who argues with a drunk is asking to get hurt. Not, uh, that they will do it intentionally, it’s just that the control factors aren’t there and they get hurt, uh, that happened many times when my mother, my father came home drunk and she started with her mouth, runneth open, she, uh, she didn’t have the most pleasant mouth and she, uh, she was yelling at my father and he popped her. (Participant #105, a non-Hispanic white male; justification)

Well, he might have been drinking, okay. His wife probably nagging him or in his mind, at least, she was nagging of him. He’s just tired of the nagging and fighting and fussing all the time. (Participant #362, a non-Hispanic white male; justification)
In response to situation involving either stabbing by one or both partners or forced sex, respondents offered the following representative remarks, which were frequently excuses or justifications.

Um, we had a maintenance worker here and his girlfriend did it twice to him, I don’t know what they argued about, but she stabbed him twice, once when he was sleeping on her sofa and he went back with her and then like a month later she stabbed him again while he was in bed and I thought, oh my God, he didn’t prosecute her the first time and the second time the state took her and prosecuted her because, you know, it is violence. It could have been something with drugs cause I know he did drugs and I know she did drugs so I figure that had to be it, that had to be it, something with drugs but I don’t know what. Where I live is on the near west side and I’ve lived here for 22 years...but next door to me, well two doors down is a guy that got stabbed. He lives there with his mom and dad now. He moved out from the lady and doesn’t live with her anymore and next door now is this house that got raided already for heroin trafficking and the woman was living with the man and he went to prison for heroin, now she has a boyfriend and they argue a lot. I never seen her totally physically abused but I seen her where her face looks puffy or something and I don’t know if it’s cause of drugs or because she and him just argue. I don’t know but I think drugs is a big part of it. (Participant #403, non-Hispanic white female)

Why would he have done something like that? What would have provoked that? Possibly him being drunk, possibly drugs, possibly she’s cheating on him where his pride, his machismo got hurt and hurt bad so in today’s society it could be drugs, a lot of drugs, a lot of alcoholism that could have caused it where it just increases the anger where the weapons come out. (Participant #105, a non-Hispanic white male)

Ok, he was probably drinking or doing drugs or something and she was probably fed up with it and she probably told him if you don’t stop I’m going to do something and he probably come back with I did this when I married you, you don’t have no right to say nothing to me, and they probably got into a physical argument and she probably grabbed a knife without thinking. (Participant #362, non-Hispanic white male; excuse and justification)

The relatively high frequency of such comments and the substance of these comments are consistent with epidemiological findings indicating an increased risk of partner violence

257

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in situations involving both perpetrator use of substances (Fagan, Stewart, and Hansen, 1983; Gondolf, 1988; Kaufman, Kantor, and Straus, 1987) and victim use of substances (Martin et al., 1996).

**Mental Illness**

Only 1 of the non-Hispanic white women (10.0%) and 1 of the non-Hispanic white men (11.1%) offered mental illness as a possible explanation for partner violence depicted in the scenarios. The statements appear below.

Could be mentally sick. (Participant #105, non-Hispanic white male, responding to a scenario in which a woman stabs her husband, resulting in a wound)

Although these numbers are small, it should be remembered that the respondents offered mental illness as a possible cause of conflict and violence; they did not select it as a possible cause from a predetermined listing of factors. Additionally, it is noteworthy that all respondents who offered mental illness as an explanation did so only for scenarios involving a more serious level of conflict, such as stabbing or forced sex. This attribution of more serious violence to persons who are mentally ill may reflect popular misconceptions about mental illness and the rates of violence perpetrated by those with mental illness (Philo, 1996; Wahl, 1995; Wedding and Boyd, 1999), and may exemplify the stigma surrounding mental illness (Goffman; 1963; Shaughnessy, 2001).

**Individual Characteristics**

A total of 4 of 10 non-Hispanic white women (40.0%), and 4 of 9 non-Hispanic white men (44.4%) identified jealousy, insecurity, and a need for power and control as
possible explanations for intimate partner violence. Often, participants indicated more than one of these characteristics as an explanation.

*Jealousy*

The following excerpts are representative of comments relating to jealousy.

Maybe, uh, he looked at another guy and got upset because that’s his man. He’s jealous. They were out at a street bar. I can’t stand just imagining this, at a gay bar and there was an attractive, you know, how usually those gay men are pretty attractive, there are some that are ugly but, uh, um, they, um, the one saw. OK, they’re at a gay bar and one of the guys was looking at another guy and the other guy got mad because, you know, they’re supposed to be together and they’re supposed to be a couple and I can’t understand that and the other one was going off and looking at the other guys and he’s like, hey, we’re in a relationship, we’re supposed to be together but this one’s looking at other men and, uh, he was denying, saying that he wasn’t and the other one was saying, yes, you were and he’s denying it and saying that you’re just jealous and why don’t you get a grip on your life and you know, but he was looking at other guys. He may have been looking at women. (Participant #363, a non-Hispanic white female, commenting on why two men might be engaged in mutual hitting)

Maybe one of them’s got an interest in another guy. Jealousy. (Participant # 106, a non-Hispanic white male, in response to a scenario involving two men attempting to stab each other)

These findings are consistent with existing empirical research findings indicating that men who batter are often fearful of intimate relationships and are highly jealous and possessive (Dutton and Golant, 1995; Wodarski, 1987). This jealousy, however, often represents an attempt to transform unacceptable feelings of anxiety, dependence, and insecurity into action that serves to negate these unwelcome emotions.
Insecurity

The response of Participant #420, a non-Hispanic white male, to a scenario involving forced sex by one woman on her female partner, was insightful in its recognition of the relationship between insecurity and the need for power: “Maybe they’re like insecure in power and they think that after sex with them that they would stay with them, something like that.” Only one other individual, however, recognized the relationship between insecurity and violence.

I think a lot of the guys that abuse women, they’re really wusses and would not fight another guy because they wouldn’t actually be able to beat him up so they can’t beat up another guy so they beat up a woman...They’re insecure and they just take out their insecurities on women rather than coping with things themselves...My husband’s that way. He would hit me but I think if you got him in a fight with another man I think he would just totally high tail it out of there. I mean I just don’t think he would fight another man cause I think you’d get hurt and I think he would get hurt. (Participant #403, a non-Hispanic white female, explaining why a man would force a woman to have sex)

Power and Control

Respondents most frequently mentioned the use of violence to gain power and control in a relationship in response to situations involving male aggression against female intimates. The following responses are representative.

He wanted power and control and he wasn’t getting it. Maybe she was arguing back or not obeying. He might have ordered her around. (Participant #103, a non-Hispanic white female, commenting on a scenario involving a married man hitting his wife)

Uh, he probably was losing control, okay. He probably was always a person that wanted to be in charge and maybe the altercation stems from something she wanted to do that was against his idea, okay and when you start losing your basis of control you’re going to do whatever it takes to recap that, okay, and so violence. (Participant #106, a non-Hispanic white male, explaining why a married man hit his wife)
Most likely, he the male, wanted to be in control or power so he basically wanted to show that he was more dominant and his way of expressing he is in charge so he raped the woman and forced her to have sex. Because rape is a form of control and it's an act of violence and it's his way of controlling the situation by showing he's boss and that he could force her to do something and that she's below him, that the female is underneath him, that she's subservient, that he's in charge. (Participant #361, a non-Hispanic white male, explaining why a man forced his unmarried partner to have sex)

However, study participants also offered a need for power and control as an explanation for mutual violence, as indicated by the following:

They'll probably stay together, they'll probably beat the shit out of each other for years until one has just physically and mentally broken down 'cause it just sounds like they're dumb enough to do it. They're the ones that like to control and it just looks like they'll fight for control, just nonstop until one of them finally gives up and gives in. (Participant #104, a non-Hispanic white female, explaining why an unmarried couple is engaged in mutual hitting)

One participant said of conflict within same sex relationships:

I think he has control issues and needs to work them out in jail. (Participant #351, a non-Hispanic white female, on why a man forced his male partner to have sex)

**Violence and Sex**

One of the 9 non-Hispanic white men (11.1%) believed that the partners depicted in the scenarios presented engaged in violence as a prelude to lovemaking. This was not indicated by any of the non-Hispanic white women. Participant #105 explained why a man forced his male partner to have sex: "Rape. Unless it's SM and he enjoys in. Dominance." There is inadequate information to state why this individual brought up the topic of sadomasochism.
Sexual Orientation

Three non-Hispanic white females (30.0%) and 3 non-Hispanic white males (33.3%), or 31.6% of the non-Hispanic white sample, discussed their perceptions of homosexuals and homosexual and lesbian relationships in their responses. Responses ranged from being sympathetic to individuals’ difficulties to expressions of disgust.

In that situation [one man forced by his partner to have sex] I feel sorry for that guy because it’s hard enough for a woman to do something about a lover or a spouse doing something like that. I can imagine it being harder for a man. The same reasons as homophobia and the minimization of it. (Participant #103, female)

Times are changing, but I think still, uh, even though times are changing, most would want to have the relationship confidential, confidential, okay. Maybe spoke to somebody, maybe, about one of their encounters. (Participant #106, male, responding to a scenario involving two men engaging in mutual hitting without resulting visible injury)

One thinks, takes more or less like a male role while the other takes a female so the one that takes a male role strikes her. (Participant #105, male, explaining the basis of a situation involving a woman who is hit and injured by her female partner)

We live in a society where in this community there are many people who come from this class of life. They do not respect each other. This situation [homosexuality] is not very agreeable. They are students. If they were professionals, you would not see this, two men having this type of relationship...we don’t know the sicknesses that exist between homosexuals, they know nothing of religion. There are professionals who know more about this type of situation (Participant #376, male, responding to a scenario in which both men hit each other and one was bruised).

I don’t care about gays. (Participant #420, male, to a situation involving the forced sex of a man by his male partner, with resulting injury)

They don’t like it when a man gets between a female-female relationship. I have no idea why, why a woman wants to be a man. (Participant #422, female, commenting on two women engaging in mutual hitting without resulting injury)

Two men having sex, I can’t deal with. Two women, I mean that’s just ludicrous. Who knows if he might have AIDS, he might have AIDS. I’ll
be honest with you because I, God made Adam and Eve, not Adam and Steve, you know. (Participant #422, on two women hitting with no resulting injury)

It is not surprising that some of the respondents responded sympathetically, while others expressed disgust or anger. These remarks may reflect these respondents' acceptance of the construction of masculinity in the United States as the repudiation of the feminine and the maximization of power, which is in many ways denied to individuals who are homosexuals.

DECIDING WHAT TO DO

Three primary strategies for addressing partner violence emerged from the participants’ responses: leaving and/or terminating the relationship, calling the police, and seeking counseling. Less frequently mentioned solutions were help-seeking from other sources and retaliation. Many participants suggested multiple strategies for resolving particular situations, sometimes to be utilized simultaneously and sometimes to be utilized in sequence, after a previous one failed to accomplish its intended purpose.

Leaving the Relationship

Leaving or terminating the relationship, such as in divorce, was recommended as a solution to partner conflict by 2 of 10 non-Hispanic white women (20.0%) and 2 of 9 non-Hispanic white men (22.2%), or 21.1% of the non-Hispanic white sample. The excerpts follow below.

I think she should dump her and move on. (Participant #103, a non-Hispanic white female, explaining what a woman should do after being forced by her female partner to have sex)
Uh, that relationship, she should dissolve it. (Participant #106, a non-Hispanic white male, on the course of action that should be pursued by a married woman who is stabbed by her husband)

Well, if the guy is like that she should definitely leave him. I’m out of here. (Participant #362, a non-Hispanic white male, explaining what an unmarried woman should do after her male partner forces her to have sex)

Leaving the relationship was suggested as a response only in cases involving more serious conflict, such as hitting or stabbing. In view of the relatively high rate of divorce in the United States, it is actually somewhat surprising that a greater proportion of individuals did not identify divorce or leaving the relationship as an option.

**Calling the Police**

Calling the police was suggested as a solution by 6 of 10 non-Hispanic white women (60.0%) and 4 of 9 non-Hispanic white men (44.4%), for a total of 52.6% of the non-Hispanic white participants. (See Table 7.) The following comments were representative.

He should call the police and press charges on her. (Participant #351 in response to a scenario involving a woman who hits her husband)

She should go to the police. He raped her, it’s rape. (Participant #403, advising on the action to be taken by a married woman who is forced by her husband to have sexual relations)

Uh, that situation...she should go to jail. He should call the cops. Because once the police are involved they are forced to do something. (Participant #105, male, responding to a scenario in which a married woman stabs her husband)

We need police involvement. There needs to be an arrest and immediate separation and, uh, that needs to be, uh, totally monitored by the courts and other agencies, probably affiliated. Somebody needs to make a report. (Participant #106, in response to a scenario involving an unmarried woman who stabs her male partner)

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It was somewhat surprising that over one-half of the participants indicated that the police should be called, in view of previous research that found that relatively few incidents of partner violence are ever reported to the police (Bachman, 1994; Schulman, 1981; Kantor and Straus, 1990). The basis for their willingness to call the police is not known. It is possible that this recommendation stems from personal experience or the experiences of individuals known to the respondents. Alternatively, the participants who suggested calling the police may have done so because of familiarity with media portrayals of the police as providing assistance in such situations, as on television dramas. One participant, however, expressed doubt about the effectiveness of calling the police in a case involving violence between two men, as indicated in the following excerpt from her interview:

One could call the police. Hopefully they would take it seriously. They might not but I don’t know. I don’t have any experience with that but they might not because it’s two men. They could be homophobic. Policemen are kind of macho. They might just think it’s, they might belittle it or minimize it or make a joke out of it. (Participant #103, a non-Hispanic white female, commenting on the response of the police to a situation in which one man hits his male partner)

This participant seemed to express doubt as to the ability or willingness of the police officers to deal sympathetically with a situation in which the construction of masculinity might vary significantly from their own.

Counseling

Counseling was suggested as a solution by 4 of 10 non-Hispanic white women (40.0%) and 5 of 9 non-Hispanic white men (55.6%), or 47.4% of the sample. (See Table 7.) Although some participants specified a particular source of the counseling, such as a
psychologist or clergy member, most simply suggested counseling without specifying the nature of the counseling or a source, such as in the following excerpts.

**Counseling, with no specification as to source:**

Maybe they should go for counseling or maybe he should practice other ways of dealing with anger. (Participant #351, a non-Hispanic white female, on what a couple should do because the husband yells at his wife)

I think they need counseling if he’s throwing something at her and she wants to stay with him because obviously he’ll do it again. (Participant #421, a non-Hispanic white female, on what should be done after a husband throws something at his wife)

I think both should receive some kind of professional counseling. (Participant #106, a non-Hispanic white male, on what a married couple should do after she throws something at her husband)

**Counseling from a specified source:**

You have agencies that can do marriage counseling, you have doctors or counselors that will give you medication that will calm your nerves down or counselors that will talk you into not doing anything wrong or trying to make you face whatever is making you do it. (Participant # 403, a non-Hispanic white female, on what a woman should do after her husband hits her)

There are always organizations to go to or something, like AA or something like that. (Participant #420, a non-Hispanic white male, offering a solution where a woman hits her husband)

It is possible that a number of these individuals offered counseling as a solution based on their own experiences. Two of these 9 individuals offering counseling were themselves professional counselors. Both were social workers. Three of the 19 non-Hispanic white respondents in the study were recruited from counseling sources or substance use programs (see Table 4). However, all of these individuals did not suggest counseling and counseling was suggested by individuals who had not been recruited from...
such sources and who did not indicate in their interviews that they had had any experience with the counseling process.

Other Strategies

Participants also recommended as possible courses of action: help-seeking through mechanisms other than the police or counseling, talking with each other, retaliation, and “conversion.”

Help-Seeking

Four individuals, 2 men and 2 women, (22.2% and 20.0%, respectively) suggested seeking assistance from sources other that the police and counselors. Reliance on these sources, which included hospitals and shelters, was often recommended in conjunction with other options.

Shelter:

I think that she should leave. Go wherever she needs to. To a shelter but a lot of women don’t go there because ...it’s a scary place to think of going. Well, for one thing, they’re not in the best neighborhoods and they can be unsafe, too because if there are people, depending on how hard their life has been, there can be people who are abusive in the shelter and I think, I think a lot of women who don’t go to shelters because they’re afraid. (Participant #103, a non-Hispanic white female, responding to a scenario in which a married woman stabs her husband)

Hospital:

Get her to the hospital. Get him locked up. That’s 9-1-1, the whole bit. (Participant #104, a non-Hispanic white female, on what should be done after a husband stabs his wife)

She should first try to get to the hospital and tell the proper authorities what he looked like and tell them about the incident and get him
Respondents rarely mentioned medical professionals as either a source of assistance generally or as a source of counseling specifically. A total of 3 non-Hispanic white participants were recruited to this study from clinics and hospitals. However, none of these individuals were among those who suggested assistance from hospitals. One non-Hispanic white female had been recruited from shelters; she suggested shelters as a possible source of assistance.

**Talking About It**

The same 9 individuals who suggested counseling also suggested that individuals talk about the situation, sometimes before proceeding to counseling or attempting other strategies. Representative examples of this suggestion are as follows.

Maybe they could talk about it if he doesn’t like her yelling at him all the time, maybe they should sit down and talk about it and discuss other things that she can do if she’s upset. (Participant # 351, a non-Hispanic white female, in response to a scenario involving a woman yelling at her husband)

I think they need to resolve their problems and talk things out before they argue. They probably both have tempers that lead to throwing things. They need to step back and analyze the situation before it gets out of hand. (Participant #421, a non-Hispanic white female, commenting on two men who are throwing things at each other)

I think maybe they need to assess it, discuss it, communicate it and, uh, find a solution and, uh, take care of it before it becomes a bigger problem. (Participant #106, a non-Hispanic white male, on what two women who yell at each other should do)

Talk to him and tell him it’s wrong and if it happens again file a lawsuit, a restraining order, anything. (Participant #423, a non-Hispanic white male, offering a course of action where an unmarried man hits his female partner)
Talking with each other was suggested only in situations involving unilateral or mutual yelling, throwing, or hitting and was not recommended in response to situations involving more serious forms of violence, such as stabbing.

**Retaliation**

One non-Hispanic white woman (10.0%) and 2 non-Hispanic white men (22.2%) suggested that retaliation constituted an appropriate response to partner aggression; this comprises 15.8% of the non-Hispanic white sample. These responses were as follows.

If I ever got beat like that [her sister] I would seriously hurt the man, I really think I would seriously hurt the man.... (Participant #403, a non-Hispanic white woman, commenting on a scenario in which a married man hits his wife)

If something like that happened to me? They would eat their knife that they stabbed me with. It's, I don't believe in weapons. You hit me, it's one of those, you hit me, you say please hit me back. It's very simple. (Participant #105, a non-Hispanic white male, in response to a scenario in which a married woman stabs her husband)

He should hit back. (Participant # 423, a non-Hispanic white male, in response to a scenario in which an unmarried couple is engaged in mutual hitting)

The 2 non-Hispanic white men who suggested retaliation did so in response to scenarios involving aggression that appeared to be perpetrated by the female partner or mutual aggression which they interpreted as having been initiated by the female, although they were also presented with situations involving both mutual aggression and aggression by the male figure. They did not suggest retaliation by females in situations involving male partner aggression. Their willingness to utilize violence as an immediate response
in lieu of seeking other less drastic options suggests that female aggression may signify a loss of their own control, which can be restored only by a display of greater force.

If this dynamic is indeed operating—and again, it is impossible to conclude that it is or it is not—it is consistent with both the theory of marital power and the interactive gender role strain/conflict paradigm. As Serra (1993) indicated, violence may culturally signify power when it is acted out by a man, but powerlessness when effectuated by a woman. It can be seen from the men’s responses that the suggested use of violence serves to neutralize or eliminate any display of power suggested by the women’s aggression. Within the framework of the interactive gender role strain/conflict paradigm, the women’s show of force may arouse feelings of anxiety in the men because it touches upon fears of abandonment and feelings of inadequacy; these emotions are too threatening and can be negated or eliminated only by silencing that which provoked them.

SUMMARY

More than one-half of the sample of non-Hispanic white respondents identified substance use as a cause of the depicted partner violence, while more than one-third indicated that infidelity and individual characteristics could prompt partner violence. Similar proportions of men and women suggested infidelity and personal characteristics as prompts for partner violence, but there was a large difference in the proportion of men and women who proffered substance use as an explanation. Less than half of the men, but almost three-quarters of the women, suggested that substance use was involved in instances of partner violence. In addition, over one-half of the men, but none of the
women, indicated that disagreements relating to children could be the cause of partner violence.

The underlying reasons for these similarities and differences are not immediately apparent. It is possible that men are more willing than women to tolerate and/or to accept the use of alcohol and other substances. This could be related to the "mainstream" U.S. conceptualization of masculinity, which permits, and in some ways even promotes, the use of alcohol as "manly." As a consequence, men might be less willing to view alcohol and other substance use as problematic or contributing to the development of a problem. The work of MacAndrew and Edgerton (1969) on drunken comportment and reliance on alcohol as an excuse or justification for behavior may provide additional insight into the reasons for this difference between the male and female participants. It is possible that, because of their socialization, men may think of alcohol as providing an excuse or justification for behavior, thereby even obviating the need to recognize the problematic nature of the behavior itself. For instance, an individual might think to himself that he wasn't really hitting his wife because he was drunk and never intended to hit her, so how could he have done so? Women may be less willing to accept this logic, or the lack thereof, as an explanation for violent behavior. Additional research would be necessary to confirm this differential finding between men and women and to understand more fully the basis for it.

It is not known from these data why more than half of the men and none of the women suggested that disagreements relating to children could be the cause of the violence. Although several potential explanations exist, additional investigation would be necessary both to confirm this finding in other groups and to more completely explore the
basis for it. One possibility is that women were unwilling to attribute the cause of partner violence to children because it would conflict with their image of what a mother should be or how a family should act. The men, on the other hand, may feel that they must compete with their children for the fulfillment of their own wishes, both in terms of attention from their partner and in terms of the availability of financial and other resources. For instance, a male partner might be precluded from buying a motorcycle because the child needs orthodontic work done.

There was remarkable similarity in the proportions of men and women suggesting particular courses of action in response to the behavior depicted in the vignettes. As an example, 20.0% of the women and 22.2% of the men suggested that leaving the relationship was an appropriate response in at least some situations. This similarity of response may derive from similarities in actual experience or from exposure to similar sources of information, such as public service announcements and television shows.
CHAPTER TWELVE
DISCUSSION

This dissertation examined two research questions: what factor or factors do self-identified Puerto Rican respondents and self-identified non-Hispanic white respondents identify as the cause or causes of intimate partner violence and (2) what solution or solutions do self-identified Puerto Rican and non-Hispanic white respondents suggest in situations involving varying levels of partner violence? These issues were explored in the social and cultural context of mainland United States and the island of Puerto Rico, among self-identified non-Hispanic whites and Puerto Ricans.

This study has limited generalizability due to its small samples size (n=45) and its situation in a specific locale—Cleveland, Ohio. In addition, relatively few individuals who could be classified as middle-class and none who could be classified as upper-class in terms of socioeconomic status were included as participants, thereby limiting the generalizability of the findings even further. Generalizability may be further limited by the sites from which participants were recruited; many of the participants came to the study from sites that are involved in the provision of services to those in need. Consequently, this sample of individuals may have had more experience as victims, perpetrators, or witnesses of violence than the general population.

Despite this small sample size, however, several trends can be noted. In order to examine these trends more easily, the findings are summarized below in Table 8.

Among the Puerto Rican participants, the three most frequent explanations for partner violence were substance use (61.5%), breaches of gender-associated behavioral
expectations (57.7%), and infidelity (50.0%). Among non-Hispanic whites, the most frequently mentioned causes of partner violence included substance use (57.9%), infidelity (47.4%), and individual characteristics (42.2%).

Table 8. Frequency of Themes by Ethnicity and Sex*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Puerto Ricans (N=26)</th>
<th>NHW (N=19)</th>
<th>Females (N=26)</th>
<th>Males (N=19)</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n (%)</td>
<td>n (%)</td>
<td>n (%)</td>
<td>n (%)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Causation</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Sex-associated</td>
<td>9 34.7</td>
<td>4 21.1</td>
<td>8 30.8</td>
<td>5 26.3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gender-associated</td>
<td>15 57.7</td>
<td>4 21.1</td>
<td>13 50.0</td>
<td>6 31.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmental</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children</td>
<td>8 30.8</td>
<td>5 26.3</td>
<td>5 19.2</td>
<td>8 42.1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Finances</td>
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<td>3 15.8</td>
<td>3 11.5</td>
<td>7 36.8</td>
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<td>10 38.5</td>
<td>12 63.2</td>
</tr>
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<td>11 57.9</td>
<td>15 57.7</td>
<td>12 63.2</td>
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<td>Mental illness</td>
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<td>2 6.9</td>
<td>6 23.1</td>
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<td>8 42.2</td>
<td>12 46.2</td>
<td>7 36.8</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Violence and sex</td>
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<td>1 3.5</td>
<td>2 7.8</td>
<td>2 10.5</td>
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<td>6 31.6</td>
<td>6 23.1</td>
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<td>4 21.1</td>
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<td>9 47.4</td>
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</table>

*Participants provided multiple responses.

There may be several reasons why substance use may have figured so prominently in the responses of both groups. First, rates of substance use are relatively high in the United States, according to news reports. Substance use is also a subject of movies and television programs. Accordingly, the reference to substance use may result from individuals’ own experiences, from observations of others or information imparted to them by others, and/or from exposure to the media in its various forms. In fact, excerpts from several of the respondents, noted in previous chapters, indicated that they
had observed others becoming violent after having had too much to drink or when a drug
deal went bad.

It is noteworthy, however, that substance use was reserved by participants in both
groups as an explanation for more severe levels of violence, such as hitting or stabbing,
rather than yelling. It is possible that respondents could not envision two intimates
engaging in severe violence unless they were under the influence of a substance.
Alternatively, it may signify that, based on personal knowledge or observation or
information from the media, participants believe that drugs may impair an individual’s
ability to reason and/or to control their own behavior.

Similar reasons may underlie the participants’ reliance on infidelity as an
explanation for violence. Infidelity is frequently depicted in the U.S. media, and this may
have served as a reference for some participants. Others, such as Participant #375,
quoted in chapter 10, may have seen this dynamic among people they knew. What is
striking, however, is that infidelity, like substance use, was reserved as an explanation for
only relatively more serious violence, such as hitting or stabbing, in contrast to yelling.
This may reflect an underlying perception that infidelity is so outrageous a behavior and
constitutes such a betrayal, that it will provoke a high level of rage.

Ultimately, however, these interviews did not answer why the infidelity might
provoke such an extreme response. As indicated by the excerpts utilized in the preceding
chapters, relatively few of the participants of either group indicated explicitly that the
violence that followed supposed infidelity was related to a sense of having to defend
one’s own territory. Infidelity as an explanation of partner violence (“defending one’s
own territory”) is potentially consistent with the biological theory of partner violence
only insofar as that violence occurs by a man against a woman, where there is the possibility that one partner is trying to preserve his or her reproductive potential with the other, however unconscious that motivation may be. In situations involving violence between same-sex partners, where there is no reproductive possibility, it becomes significantly less tenable as a theoretical explanation.

Violence linked to infidelity is also, however, potentially explainable by reference to patriarchy theory and to the gender role strain paradigm. Violence in response to infidelity could flow from a sense that the male partner is dominant and should remain so; infidelity challenges that status. Additional research would be necessary to understand better individuals’ perceptions of the underlying mechanisms.

Within the Puerto Rican sample, breaches of gender-associated behavior ranked as one of the three most frequently cited causes of partner violence. On an individual basis, again, this may reflect the participants’ own experiences or their observations of others. On a broader level, reference to Puerto Rico’s history may provide an additional explanation for this finding. As indicated in the discussion of the cultural and historical context, Puerto Rican families have undergone significant change during the last century. The role that was thrust upon men during the Spanish occupation required that they support their families through wage earnings. The ease of this task became increasingly difficult as Puerto Rico moved from a model of small farming to larger commercial agricultural ventures requiring wage labor to industries requiring labor traditionally associated with women’s work, such as the garment industry. As explained earlier, the entry of more women into the labor force and the need to rely on their wages for survival resulted in increased demands by women for greater freedom and a decrease in men’s
own esteem due to their increasing inability to fulfill their traditional role of providing for
their families. The eruption of violence under such circumstances was observed by both
Bourgois (1995) and Mintz (1960), for instance. If this dynamic is operating at the
individual level, as well as the broader, cultural level, it would seem to lend credence to
the gender role strain paradigm.

Individual characteristics ranked as third most frequently cited reason for partner
violence among non-Hispanic whites; these characteristics included jealousy, insecurity,
and a need for power and control. Literature relating to partner violence indicates that
these three characteristics often co-exist in men who batter. Few participants recognized
the potential connection between these three characteristics, however.

The same potential solutions for the violence ranked within the three most
frequently identified solutions to the violence by both Puerto Rican and non-Hispanic
white participants: leaving the relationship, calling the police, and seeking counseling.
However, leaving the relationship was generally offered as a potential solution in
circumstances involving more serious violence. The frequency with which this was
suggested is not surprising, in view of the relatively high divorce rate in the United States
and the historical data from Puerto Rico that indicates that violence has been a primary
reasons for seeking divorce.

A large proportion of participants in each group--more than a third of the Puerto
Rican participants and more than a half of the non-Hispanic white participants--
suggested calling the police for assistance. Because the interviews did not seek
information about participants' own experiences with the police, it is not possible to
know if those participants who did not suggest the police did not do so because of
previous unpleasant experiences, or if those who did suggest the police had had previous helpful experiences.

Counseling was suggested by a large proportion of both the Puerto Rican (61.5%) and the non-Hispanic white participants (47.4%). It is possible that this reflects a bias due to participants' previous experiences as either professionals or clients in counseling.

In general, the responses of the male and female participants relating to both the cause of the depicted violence and what should be done about the violence were similar. However, large differences existed in the proportions of men and women who identified as possible causes of the violence conflict relating to children (females, 19.2%; males, 42.1%), finances (women, 11.5%; men, 36.8%), and infidelity (women, 38.5%; men, 63.2%). The underlying reasons for these differences are not available from these data. It is possible that these differences result from differences in the socialization of men and women to the gender roles to which they are assigned by virtue of their biological sex.

For instance, women in U.S. culture are socialized to be attentive to the needs of children more so than are men, so it is less socially acceptable to indicate that disagreements related to children could provoke violent disagreement. Similarly, although men may be socialized to believe that it is their responsibility to provide for and support their families, they may experience conflict because they are simultaneously encouraged to evidence their independence; behaviors that effectuate the former may be perceived as negating the latter and vice versa. This internal conflict may be expressed or resolution attempted by directing the conflict outward at one's partner.

Although the explanations for the similarities in the responses of men and women are not immediately discernible, they indicate that a minimal level of commonality of
experience and understanding of that experience exists despite differences in gender. However, the fact that large differences exist in the responses between the men and women also suggests that gender may impact in critical ways on the understanding of experience.

This research was not designed to test a specific theory of partner violence. The identification of a single valid theory would facilitate the development of interventions and serve as a "magic bullet." However, the breadth and multiplicity of participant responses relating to the cause of partner violence and potential mechanisms to resolve such situations would suggest that such an approach would be misguided. Rather, a theoretical framework must be sufficiently broad to encompass factors that operate on multiple levels and that permit consideration of such critical elements as ethnicity and gender. Accordingly, multifactoral theories may foster a more in-depth understanding of the basis for partner violence and potential remedies than does any other single theory.

The findings of this study could serve as the basis for additional future study to understand the historical and cultural context in which partner violence occurs among non-Hispanic whites and Puerto Ricans. The methodology that could be used for that study could make use of a variety of techniques, including in-depth interviews and focus groups with key informants, individuals who have suffered violence, and individuals who have committed violence and participant observation. Few studies have examined perceptions of partner violence and its cause, and even fewer have done so on a longitudinal basis. Yet, it is possible that the perceptions of violence and its causes may change over time, particularly as the cultural and economic contexts in which the violence occurs changes as well. It would be important, then, to examine these issues on
a longitudinal basis. Too, few of the theoretical models of partner violence have been tested directly. Empirical support for a particular theoretical framework would allow us to have a more solid foundation on which to build potential intervention and prevention strategies.
**Series 1: Husband/wife; husband is violent**

1. Manuel and Lupita are married. Manuel throws something at her. She is not hurt. (Michael, Lucy)

2. Javier and Isabella are married. He forces her to have sex even though she doesn’t want to. She is not hurt. (John, Isabel)

3. Leonardo and Carmelita are married. He yells at her loudly. (Leonard, Cathy)

4. Manuel and Susanna are married. He hits her. She is not injured. (Mitch, Susan)

5. Joanna and Luis are married. He hits her. She develops a dark bruise where he hit her. (Joan, Louis)

6. German and Monica are married. He tries to stab her with a knife. She is not injured. (Greg, Monica)

7. Alma and Roberto are married. He stabs her with a knife, causing a bleeding wound. (Ann, Robert)

8. Esperanza and Jose are married. He forces her to have sex even though she doesn’t want to. She is hurt physically. (Esther, Joe)

**Series 2: Husband/wife; wife is violent**

1. Manuel and Isabella are married. Isabella throws something at Manuel. He is not hurt. (Mitch, Isabel)

2. Antonio and Monica are married. She yells at him loudly. (Tony, Monica)

3. Esperanza and Jesus are married. She hits him. He is not injured. (Esther, John)

4. Daniel and Margarita are married. She hits him. He develops a dark bruise where she hit him. (Dan, Margaret)

5. Maria and Leonardo are married. She tries to stab him with a knife. He is not injured. (Mary, Leonard)

6. Patricia and Leon are married. She stabs him with a knife, causing a bleeding wound. (Patricia, Leon)

**Series 3: Husband/wife; violence is bidirectional**

1. Jorge and Juanita are married. They throw things at each other. No one is hurt. (George, Jane)

2. Eduardo and Rosa are married. They yell at each other. (Edward, Rose)
3. Franco and Dolores are married. They hit each other. No one is hurt. (Frank, Donna)

4. Pedro and Leticia are married. They hit each other. Leticia, but not Pedro, is hurt. (Peter, Linda)

5. Teresa and Manuel are married. They hit each other. Manuel, but not Teresa, is hurt. (Theresa, Mitch)

6. Ricardo and Luz are married. They tried to stab each other with a knife. No one is hurt. (Richard, Lucy)

7. Artemio and Marta are married. They tried to stab each other with a knife. Marta, but not Artemio, is hurt. (Arthur, Martha)

8. Alfredo and Daniela are married. They tried to stab each other with a knife. Alfredo, but not Daniela, is hurt. (Al, Dorothy)

Series 4: Male/female, unmarried; male is violent

1. Manuel and Lupita are not married. Manuel throws something at her. She is not hurt. (Michael, Linda)

2. Javier and Isabella are not married. He forces her to have sex even though she doesn’t want to. She is not hurt. (John, Isabel)

3. Leonardo and Carmelita are not married. He yells at her loudly. (Leonard, Cathy)

4. Manuel and Susanna are not married. He hits her. She is not injured. (Michael, Susan)

5. Joanna and Luis are not married. He hits her. She develops a dark bruise where he hit her. (Joan, Louis)

6. German and Monica are not married. He tries to stab her with a knife. She is not injured. (Greg, Monica)

7. Alma and Roberto are not married. He stabs her with a knife, causing a bleeding wound. (Ann, Robert)

8. Esperanza and Jose are not married. He forces her to have sex even though she doesn’t want to. She is hurt physically. (Ethel, Joe)

Series 5: Male/female, unmarried; female is violent

1. Manuel and Isabella are not married. Isabella throws something at Manuel. He is not hurt. (Michael, Isabel)

2. Antonio and Monica are not married. She yells at him loudly. (Tony, Monica)

3. Esperanza and Jesus are not married. She hits him. He is not injured. (Emma, John)
4. Daniel and Margarita are not married. She hits him. He develops a dark bruise where she hit him. (Dan, Margaret)

5. Maria and Leonardo are not married. She tries to stab him with a knife. He is not injured. (Mary, Leonard)

6. Patricia and Leon are not married. She stabs him with a knife, causing a bleeding wound. (Patricia, Leon)

Series 6: Male/female, unmarried; violence is bidirectional

1. Jorge and Juanita are not married. They throw things at each other. No one is hurt. (George, Jane)

2. Eduardo and Rosa are not married. They yell at each other. (Edward, Rose)

3. Franco and Dolores are not married. They hit each other. No one is hurt. (Frank, Donna)

4. Pedro and Leticia are not married. They hit each other. Leticia, but not Pedro, is hurt. (Peter, Linda)

5. Teresa and Manuel are not married. They hit each other. Manuel, but not Teresa, is hurt. (Theresa, Mitch)

6. Ricardo and Luz are not married. They tried to stab each other with a knife. No one is hurt. (Richard, Lucy)

7. Artemio and Marta are not married. They tried to stab each other with a knife. Marta, but not Artemio, is hurt. (Arthur, Martha)

8. Alfredo and Daniela are not married. They tried to stab each other with a knife. Alfredo, but not Daniela, is hurt. (Alfred, Diane)

Series 7: Male same sex violence; unidirectional

1. Jose and Gregorio are lovers. Jose throws something at Gregorio. He is not hurt. (Joe, Greg)

2. Miguel and Felipe are lovers. Felipe forces Miguel to have sex even though he doesn’t want to. He is not hurt. (Michael, Philip)

3. Tomas and Juan are lovers. Juan yells at Tomas loudly. (Thomas, John)

4. Franco and Pietro are lovers. Franco hits Pietro. He is not injured. (Frank, Peter)

5. German and Pedro are lovers. German hits Pedro. Pedro develops a dark bruise where German hit him. (Greg, Peter)

6. Jorge and Ricardo are lovers. Jorge tries to stab Ricardo with a knife. He is not injured. (George, Richard)
7. Manuel and Eduardo are lovers. Eduardo stabs Manuel with a knife, causing a bleeding wound. (Mitch, Edward)

8. Roberto and Jose are lovers. Roberto forces Jose to have sex even though he doesn’t want to. He is hurt physically. (Robert, Joe)

Series 8: Male same sex violence; bidirectional

1. Jose and Gregorio are lovers. They throw things at each other. No one is hurt. (Joe, Greg)

2. Manuel and Felipe are lovers. They yell at each other. (Mitch, Philip)

3. Tomas and Juan are lovers. They hit each other. No one is hurt. (Thomas, John)

4. Franco and Pietro are lovers. They hit each other. Franco, but not Pietro, is hurt. (Frank, Peter)

5. German and Pedro are lovers. They tried to stab each other with a knife. No one is hurt. (Greg, Peter)

6. Jorge and Ricardo are lovers. They tried to stab each other with a knife. Jorge, but not Ricardo, is hurt. (George, Richard)

Series 9: Female same sex violence; unidirectional

1. Berta and Carmen are lovers. Berta throws something at Carmen. She is not hurt. (Beth, Cathy)

2. Minerva and Teresa are lovers. Minerva forces Teresa to have sex even though she doesn’t want to. She is not hurt. (Mary, Theresa)

3. Alma and Margarita are lovers. Margarita yells at Alma loudly. (Ann, Margaret)

4. Susana and Luz are lovers. Susana hits Luz. She is not injured. (Susan, Lucy)

5. Isabella and Lupita are lovers. Lupita hits Isabella. Isabella develops a dark bruise where Lupita hit her. (Isabel, Linda)

6. Joanna and Monica are lovers. Monica tries to stab Joanna with a knife. She is not injured. (Joan, Monica)

7. Esperanza and Maria are lovers. Esperanza stabs Maria with a knife, causing a bleeding wound. (Emma, Mary)

8. Rosa and Dolores are lovers. Rosa forces Dolores to have sex even though she doesn’t want to. She is hurt physically. (Rose, Donna)
1. Berta and Carmen are lovers. They throw things at each other. No one is hurt. (Beth, Cathy)

2. Minerva and Teresa are lovers. They yell at each other. (Margaret, Theresa)

3. Susana and Luz are lovers. They hit each other. No one is hurt. (Susan, Lucy)

4. Isabel and Lupita are lovers. They hit each other. Isabel is hurt, but not Lupita. (Isabel, Linda)

5. Isabel and Lupita are lovers. They hit each other. Lupita is hurt but not Isabela. (Isabel, Linda)

6. Joana and Monica are lovers. They try to stab each other with a knife. No one is hurt. (Joan, Monica)

7. Esperanza and Maria are lovers. They try to stab each other with a knife. Esperanza is hurt, but not Maria. (Emma, Mary)

8. Esperanza and Maria are lovers. They try to stab each other with a knife. Maria is hurt, but not Isabela. (Emma, Mary)


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