2000

Differences in Attitude Between Black and White Women Towards Domestic Violence

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DIFFERENCES IN ATTITUDE BETWEEN

BLACK AND WHITE WOMEN

TOWARDS DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

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An Abstract Presented to the Faculty
of the Graduate School of Lindenwood University
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
of Master of Arts
2000

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to determine the similarities and/or differences between African American and White women in their level of acceptance and personal experience regarding domestic violence. This study compared 62 women, 31 African American and 31 White women, ages ranging from 18 to over 58, employed at an area hospital in St. Louis. The study addressed their experiences and attitudes toward domestic violence. The data was analyzed through descriptive statistical comparisons between the two groups, using the Chi-Square procedure. The results of the study indicate no significant difference in the level of acceptance of violence between the groups. However, the groups had a difference in attitude toward counseling. Limitations of this study and implications for future research are covered in the discussion.

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Chapter I

Introduction

The history of society divides and separates the human species by race, cultural background and ethnicity. Society has become curious in knowing the behavior, value and lifestyle of various races. The research of different cultures has opened the door for more knowledge and understanding. This may lead to the correction of misconceptions that allow for negative thoughts and beliefs.

A small amount of inconclusive research has been conducted on domestic violence issues between Black and White women (Hampton & Gelles, 1994; Campbell, 1993; Ucko, 1994). Research findings have often indicated that Black women are more likely to be victims of domestic abuse than White women. For example, Hampton and Gelles' (1994) research stated that more middle class African American women are victims of abuse than their White counterparts. Some studies have found that incidents of battery are fewer among Blacks than Whites. Other studies report the reverse, and still others report no racial difference in battery (Pierce & Harris, 1993). However, more reports indicate husband to wife violence is higher among Blacks.

Domestic violence is the most common crime in the United States. It has been acknowledged that domestic violence is not limited to one race, educational level or cultural background; it is a behavior that has spread across all walks of life. Also, women who experience abuse from their partners during the dating phase will continue to experience abuse during the marriage. (Quillian, 1996). The myth for most women is that the problem subsides once they are married .

Most abuse that occurs before the marriage usually continues and escalates to a higher level during marriage. When domestic violence is placed under a general category for all women, approximately 95% of the victims are women. It is estimated that three to four million American women are battered each year by their husbands or partners, causing more injury to women between the ages of 15–44 (Pierce & Harris, 1993).

Campbell (1993) states that an estimated 1.8 million women are assaulted annually. Skoglund (1992) reported women are injured in violent relationships every 15 seconds in the United States. However, the victim is often reluctant to report the abuse. Only 10% of actual cases of domestic abuse are identified and effectively handled. In addition, only 60% of physical, sexual and emotional abuse cases are reported (Strauss, Gelles & Steinmetz, 1980).

Negative images of African Americans have influenced cultural perceptions of African American women's attitudes toward domestic violence. The mass media has painted a portrait of the Black family that indicates 1) All Blacks are poor, living on public assistance and reside in a high crime area; 2) Black families are disorganized and fragmented, and lack morals and values; 3) All Blacks believe that violence is the way to solve problems; and 4) Blacks see violence as a way of life and human life is of little value (Brice-Baker, 1993).

Black victims of violence are often referred to as the "silence community." In the Black community, violence is often committed against the weaker members of the family. Silence regarding violence is not a norm as viewed by the media

and society, but a reaction of shame, fear and detrimental racial loyalty (Campbell, 1993).

It is important for society to understand that African American women who experience physical, mental and sexual abuse experience symptoms of trauma that are the same as those experienced by White women. Black women experiencing the severe trauma of long-term abuse suffer from mental, physical and emotional crippling, the same as their White counterparts.

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this research was to determine the similarities and/or differences in the attitudes of Black and White women toward domestic violence. This study compared a group of 60 women to determine their experience with, and/or exposure to, battering. The study then addressed the issue of whether or not the attitude toward battering was different between the two groups.

Chapter II

Literature Review

Studies have shown that domestic violence is not limited to one culture. Domestic violence has escalated to all levels of society, affecting family members from various ethnic groups, socioeconomic levels and educational backgrounds (Dobash & Dobash, 1979; Straus, Gelles & Steinmetz, 1980).

Domestic violence is a behavior described as physical, sexual and/or psychological abuse. "Physical abuse is defined as the use of force against one's will. This behavior is associated with punching, hitting, slapping, restraining, hitting with weapons, shooting and stabbing. Sexual violence is the use of physical force, coercion or psychological intimidation to make someone perform a sexual act against their will. Psychological violence is defined as intense and continuous degradation and/or controlling the actions or behavior of another person through intimidation, manipulation, psychological abuse, ritual abuse and brainwashing, resulting in the erosion of a person's identity." (Skoglund, 1992, p. 217.)

More medical treatment is required for women victimized by domestic violence than rape, auto accidents and mugging combined. It is estimated that over one million women seek some form of medical assistance for injury caused by battering (Stark & Flitcraft, 1982).

According to Walker (1979), women of all ethnic groups, religions, ages and moral backgrounds have generally experienced the cycle of violence and the

effects of battering over a long period. Walker identified three phases that women experience through the cycle of violence.

One is the escalation phase, which is characterized by increased tension, anger, blaming and arguing. A broad spectrum of coercion tactics is used to control the victim. These tactics may be used to control panic in the victim or to isolate the victim from family, friends or other resources. Emotional abuse tends to erode the victim's self-esteem and self-confidence. These control methods are also used to instill fear in the victim.

Two is the acute incident phase. Violence is used to control the victim and keep the victim from resisting the control of the abuser. Other forms of abuse can be equally effective to continue the battering, power and control. For example, threatening to destroy valuable property or to harm pets, children or other family members.

Three is the de-escalation phase, which is characterized as a genuine feeling of quiet or remorse by the abuser. It also instills hope that the battering will not happen again. This also coincides with the type of coercion behavior the abuser utilizes (Walker, 1979).

Battering causes women to experience low self-esteem, depression, increased alcohol or drug abuse, emotional problems, illness, permanent physical damage due to injuries received and even death. (Kashari, Daniel, Danday & Holcomb, 1992). However, it has taken many years for society and health professionals to acknowledge, recognize and understand domestic violence.

Historical Overview

European History

According to European history, the law empowered men to rule, protect, chastise and control what they considered as their possession. Women were considered as servants, not of equal status to men. Men were given rights by law to own their wives' earnings, or in some instances to torture and kill women if they thought it was justifiable. The Christian Church was an advocate of the patriarchal male society and not supportive of women's independence. The church believed it was God's law for women to obey their husbands. (Ucko, 1994). It was in the woman's best interest to obey (Dobash & Dobash, 1979; Walker, 1986).

The ideology of White male superiority over women was brought over to the New World with little change for women's independence. Women were still denied by law to have voting rights, property rights, etc. The move for women's independence started to take place during the late 19th and early 20th centuries (Ucko, 1994).

The fight for equal rights by women was difficult for men and society as a whole to accept. Society was indoctrinated with the European behavior of White male superiority. Ucko (1994) suggests that African men, after slavery, began to incorporate the ideal of men's superiority over women.

African American History

In the study of African and European culture, scholars found that European culture has influenced African American families. Ucko's (1994) study comparing stable African American families and stable White families shows higher proportions of African American spouses reporting equality in conflict resolution than White families. African women were seen as strong but not domineering. Ucko (1994) sees that African tradition influenced the strength the modern Black woman. The process of living "in most black families is typified by an egalitarian pattern of relations" (p. 194).

The concept of strong, independent women was a trait brought over from West Africa to the New World during slavery. Women were strong and independent, but cooperative in their relationship with the husband. The European heritage of man controlling women and making them subservient to men was not a part of the West African woman's beliefs. However, in the New World, cultural attitudes play a great part in influencing European settlers as well as the African slavery population (Ucko, 1994).

The idea of the "strong Black woman" is a myth that implies Black women's roles in the family are to receive regular whippings. These whippings are enforced to relieve the Black man's stress. Richie (1985) argued that many Black women believe in this ideal of "strong Black women."

According to Ucko (1994), many African Americans took over the oppressive tactics of domination and aggression. Also, many African American men and women were influenced by the European version of male dominance in

the home. This ideology was more restrictive on women's activities and much more oppressive to women than the pre-colonial African heritage. White European women had more activities and developed culturally acceptable ways of coping with oppression, overt compliance, acquiescence, covert manipulation and deception (Morgan, 1984; Anderson & Zinner, 1988). Pre-colonial African women were known as priestesses, warriors, and close advisors to kings and chiefs. Women had a predominant role in agriculture, trading and crafts, and had economic and political power. However, pre-colonial women also suffered from the ideology of male superiority. Men could treat women with disdain and ridicule (Ucko, 1994).

African history during slavery became an important issue for researchers to understand and justify violence in the African American family. European heritage of males in the White community indicates they are expected to be the dominant and controlling species. Violent behavior is expected because of old traditions (Pierce & Harris, 1993).

Physical abuse occurred due to Black men's racial oppression and from society's systematic mistreatment (Straus et al., 1980). African American men exhibit this behavior when their manhood is challenged due to interpersonal conflict with Black women and fears of failure (Pierce & Harris, 1993).

Psychological Issues

Black men may be perceived differently from other ethnic groups, because of their social status in society compared to White men. Black men have a limited amount of privilege, economically, politically and from an educational standpoint.

Black men's representation of their role in society is often based on the National Crime Report's negative image, the media and movies (Pierce & Harris, 1993).

Ucko's (1994) study states that slavery has caused social scars. Feelings of intense anger, hatred and frustration experienced by the Black population could be the result of the violence and brutality inflicted on the slave population. Such feelings often burst out as violent actions against those that are nearest – frequently wives, husbands or lovers.

Ucko (1994) recognizes the development of dual personality as a reaction to slavery. Slaves had to displace aggression, deflect anger, deny their own feelings and deal with both negative and positive emotions simultaneously. Ambivalence became a familiar coping mechanism, not only in dealing with the "Master" but in family relationships as well.

<div align="center">Cultural Myths</div>

Pierce and Harris (1993) stated that people view the world differently, from different dimensions. They have their own way of thinking and judging others in their view toward understanding domestic violence. Society's attitude toward domestic violence is different depending on how they view both the victim and the abuser. The "just world" theory, described by Kristiansen and Guilietti (1995) states, "Because we live in a just world, we deserve what we get and hence get what we deserve" (p. 178).

Kristiansen and Guilietti (1995) pointed out that society has come to judge humans by their own beliefs and values, not by studying the family system as a unit, but by separating the individual and judging her character. Torres (1991)

justified wife abuse in society as a behavior that has been a reflection of cultural values and rules. Where women are viewed as inferior in society, wife abuse was found to be more common (Lester, 1980).

Society has endorsed the myth of masochistic behavior, stating that women are partially responsible for the battering and decision-making as to whether to leave or stay in the relationship. Society views women who continue to stay in an abusive relationship as having low self-esteem, feelings of powerlessness, financial dependence, feelings of guilt, feelings of responsibility for the battering, and fear of reprisal (Aubrey & Ewing, 1989).

In communities, some health care providers condone the "turn your head" syndrome to say, "what I don't see or acknowledge won't hurt philosophy." This behavior is the fear of confronting the family with private and personal issues due to the fear of retaliation and confidentiality (Denham, 1995).

One myth of society regarding abuse is that abuse occurs in all marriages. Second, women believe they can change their husband's behavior. Third, women are tormented with fear that the thought or implication of leaving will bring on more violent behavior that may be fatal. Fourth, there is a feeling of ambivalence toward the abusive partner (Brice-Baker, 1994).

According to Gilliland and James (1997), the following describes other beliefs society created to disregard women in domestic violence situations (p. 272-273):

1) The abuse is overstated by women.

2) The beating is provoked by the woman.

3) It is a private affair that the family has to deal with.

4) The reason for domestic violence is alcohol abuse.

5) Battering only occurs in dysfunctional families.

6) Possession of a person implies love.

7) One should tolerate violence.

8) To control someone, a person must use force and it is acceptable.

9) Battering does occur with the mentally disturbed and the sick.

10) If the victim stays, the battering may not be that bad.

11) Patriarchal rights are always placed upon the husband.

12) The only people who experience battering are working class and low income families.

13) Battering is the problem of the uneducated, the poor and minorities.

Domestic violence has issues that have been applied to White American women with little focus on African American women and other ethnic groups. Unfortunately, there has been little research conducted on the effects of domestic violence on African American women.

Many myths have been associated with Black women's behavior regarding domestic violence and Black women's acceptance of themselves. Pierce and Harris (1993) stated Black women are characterized as domineering and controlling in most literature studies. Black women are described as less likely to tolerate abuse and less likely to accept it. The blame for any ill behavior should be directed toward Black men (Cazenave & Straus, 1989).

Black women have been portrayed as matriarchs who drain Black men of their masculinity. Black women are also seen as strong creatures who can take care of themselves and others around them without help (Ashbury, 1993; Moynihan, 1965). Black women's matriarchal position in the family has caused problems with role identification: who is the breadwinner, who is the stronger gender?

The images placed on Black women as exotic love objects and sexual temptresses may suggest Black women provoke the abuse by arousing Black men's sexual emotions and/or trying to acquire attention from their husbands by enticing other men, which invokes aggressive behavior in the husband (Brice-Baker, 1994).

Another image of Black women is that people who come from warm climates are seen as carefree and sensual. People from these areas are viewed as a culture whose primary goal is life is the pursuit of pleasure. Self-indulgence is their only happiness, their reason for existence. These people are believed to pursue pleasure in many different ways, or that their only happiness is the pursuit of pleasure. This may be why attacks made on Black women are thought to be provoked by their seductive behavior. However, Black women who are considered as seductresses and exotic love objects whose primary concern is the pursuit of pleasure is often considered unattractive in society (Brice-Baker, 1994).

Stereotyping Black women has caused them to look at themselves in a negative way. Black women sometimes see themselves as unattractive, deserving the abuse by their spouses (Ashbury, 1983).

Prevalence of Abuse

Society may overestimate Black women's acceptance of abuse and the implications on Black women's ability to cope. It has been reported that the rate of severe violence in African American families was 113 per 1,000, and in White families 30 per 1,000 (Straus et al., 1980). Wife and husband violence in Black families was 76 per 1,000, compared to 41 per 1,000 in White families. However, the average annual rate of single offender violent victimizations per 1,000 females is 5.8% for African Americans and 5.4% for White Americans (National Crime Victimization Survey Report, 1994).

In a comparison of husband and wife violence in Black and White families (Hampton & Gelles, 1994), it was reported that Black families were 1.23 times more likely to experience minor violence and 2.36 times as likely to experience severe violence than White families. According to Cazenave and Straus (1979), when the income of Black families is controlled, respondents were less likely to report spousal slapping. However, the level of spousal slapping was much higher for those in the $6,000 to $11,000 income range. Black respondents in the lower and higher income level were less likely to engage in violent behavior than White respondents within the same income range. In addition, African American families employed in blue and white-collar jobs had a higher rate of spousal violence. Violence before marriage was rated higher in the Black community compared to Whites. Courtship violence was found to be higher among Blacks than Whites. Violence before marriage usually occurred among couples under age 30 (De Maris, 1990; 1980, Lockhart; Straus et al., 1987).

As stated in the National Crime Victimization Survey Report (1994), Black women (compared to White women) experience the highest level of violent behavior committed by an intimate lover, acquaintance or stranger. According to this survey of 1,000 women, Black women have experienced 10.5% of violence by a stranger, compared to 7.2% of White women; 5.8% of Black women have experienced violence by an intimate lover, compared to 5.4% of White women. The percentage of Black women victimized by an intimate lover in the city is 6.5%, and 4.6% in the suburbs; the percentage of women victimized by a stranger in the city is 8.8%, and 4.6% in the suburbs; the percentage of women victimized by an acquaintance in the city is 9.5%, compared to 6.4% in the suburbs (National Crime Victimization Report, 1994.

Researchers found that some Black women stay in an abusive relationship because they are financially unable to support themselves. On the other hand, many White women can leave an abusive relationship because they are able to be self-supportive with the help of their husband's finances.

Black women who leave and look for help for the violent abuse may seek refuge through medical services or resources. Clinics and hospitals are facilities that can be used by Black women requiring treatment for violent abuse. These facilities are used by Black women because they require no long-term commitment and there is no personal relationship with the caregiver or physician (Brice-Baker, 1994; Coley & Beckett, 1988).

Most Black women, after returning home from the clinic or hospital seek emotional stability from family members or friends. African American women

depend on the extended family for mental support. Professional counselors are usually not preferred services among Black women. In fact, it has been found that most Black women regard counseling as of little importance and not very helpful, because the primary focus in their life is on economic survival, not on building their self-esteem (Coley & Beckett, 1988). Social service agencies often do not help African American women, because they may not understand the Black women's position in the abusive relationship. When compared with White women, the behavior associated with Black women's abuse is often not considered the same. Instead, extended families become the counselors and social workers, providing guidance and direction. Black women's concerns are economics and racial issues in the community (Coley & Beckett, 1988; Sudarkasa, 1981).

Another issue for Black women dealing with counselors and social workers is the discomfort of disclosing their abuse in an open setting with other cultures. Black women may feel by not disclosing their abuse, it may keep the relationship with their spouse intact and therefore uphold a bond in the African American Community. Coley (1988) referred to this behavior as "the trap of loyalty" – keeping cohesiveness with the spouse and maintaining racial bonding within the Black community (p. 490).

Most comparative research to date has examined Black-White differences in family violence. Cazenave et al. (1978) pointed out that Blacks were more likely than Whites to approve of couple slapping, for husbands to report slapping their wives, and for husbands to report severe violence towards their wives. Wife

to husband violence was less pronounced, though Black wives were twice as likely as White wives to report both slapping and severe violence toward their husbands. In a national study conducted between 1975 and 1985, the level of spousal slapping was unchanged; however, there was a significant decline in severe violence among Black husbands toward their spouses. In addition, the level of husband to wife violence declined 21.8%, but wife to husband violence increased.

Research conducted by Hampton and Gelles (1994) found Black women who have experienced being hit by their mother as a teenager or who witness abuse in their family without the knowledge that this is unacceptable, have the highest rate of husband to wife abuse. If the abuse was experienced from childhood to adulthood, many women may consider it as normal behavior to be beaten by a man (Coley & Beckett, 1988).

The perception of battering was found to be different between Black and White women. Racial and socioeconomic oppression has greatly impacted Black women's perceptions. One research study noted that socioeconomic and cultural environments are an important factor in understanding African American women's behavior toward domestic violence (Sudarkasa, 1981).

Environmental factors such as socioeconomic resources and the tradition of men's roles in the household influence the behavior of domestic violence. Other influences are alcohol and drug abuse. In studying African American women who accompanied their partner in the use of drugs, it was documented that

these women were beaten when they did not provide money. This behavior has been reported with the use of crack (Carlson, 1977).

It has also been suggested that wife abuse is not perpetuated by cultural background, but was due to income status, occupational status and educational level (Straus et al., 1980). African American households with low-income status and lower paying jobs have an increased rate of family violence. In African American families who had full-time employment, spousal abuse was not as prevalent. This could also result from spouses being too exhausted to display negative behavior (Cazenave & Straus, 1976; Straus et al., 1980).

The impact of stereotyping Blacks has followed the minds of culture from generation to generation. With the help of television and movie medial, negative images of Blacks will continue to influence the minds of other cultures.

Stereotyping is not only directed toward Black women. Black men have also been stereotyped by negative images, which were created during slavery when White men had to justify the cruel treatment of Black men. Black men were referred to as Mandingo warriors or strong bucks, which implied they were some form of untamed animal. These images suggested that Black men have a higher sexual climate and exhibit violent behavior as a natural part of their character (Brice-Baker, 1994).

Studies to Assess Attitudes

There have been few instruments developed to assess how society views domestic violence. However, a few studies reveal interesting conceptions regarding society's attitude toward domestic violence.

Aubrey and Ewing (1989) conducted an attitude test using psychology students and adult voters to determine if society endorsed myths about battered women. They found that society tends to believe that women who are battered are partially responsible for the abuse. If the woman remains in the abusive relationship, she is considered masochistic and emotionally disturbed. People also believe that the woman has the option to leave the abusive situation if she wanted. Aubrey and Ewing then found that women in the study were more likely than men to endorse stereotyping of battered women.

The students were less likely to agree than the adult voters that if abuse was occurring in a marriage, that the couple had serious marital problems. They also agreed that if the wife was afraid, she could simply leave the relationship, and if she continued to stay despite being beaten, she was masochistic or emotionally disturbed. Among male voters, it was agreed more often that the battering was an isolated incident and that the victim was partially responsible. Female voters agreed more often that the victim could simply leave the battering and that she was masochistic if she did not. Female voters were more than twice as likely as males to agree that a victim is somewhat masochistic if she does not leave the battering. Female students were less likely than male students to agree that if the victim allowed herself to be slapped, she was emotionally disturbed.

Both students and adult voters endorsed the stereotype of battered women. However, students were different in that they endorsed some of the stereotypes, which could be due to media coverage.

Another study conducted by Torres (1991) compared the similarities and differences in wife abuse between two groups of abused women, White American and Mexican American. She examined the women's attitudes toward wife abuse and the perception by the women of what constitutes wife abuse. Torres also examined the nature of wife abuse and the extent of the severity and frequency of abuse. Her results showed that there were more similarities than differences between the groups. The primary difference was that Mexican American women seemed to have a more tolerant attitude toward abuse, and White American women perceived abusive behavior as more serious than Mexican women. These cultural differences could be important in developing treatment plans and intervention.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to compare and determine the similarities and/or differences in the attitudes of African American and White American women towards domestic violence. In most literature, husband to wife abuse is higher among the Black community than with Whites. Couple violence before marriage was also higher among African American couples than their White counterparts.

Chapter III

Method

Subjects

The subjects consisted of 60 women (30 African American and 30 White), working at an area hospital. Data was collected within a two-day period. Women who participated in the study were asked questions regarding age, race, demographic area, job position and highest educational level (see Appendix A).

In examining the age distribution of the samples, the African American participants consisted of one woman aged 18 to 27 (3.3%), 13 who were aged 28 to 37 (43.3%), seven aged 38 to 47 (23.3%), seven aged 48 to 57 (23.3%), and two above 58 (6.7%). The Caucasian participants consisted of three who were aged 18 to 27 (10.0%), eight aged 28 to 37 (26.7%), 13 aged 38 to 47 (43.3%), five aged 48 to 57 (16.7%), and one was above 58 (3.3%).

Table 1

Distribution of Samples

Age Group	African American		Caucasian	
	f	%	f	%
18-27	1	3.3	3	10.0
28-37	13	43.3	8	26.7
38-47	7	23.3	13	43.3
48-57	7	23.3	5	16.7
Above 58	2	6.7	1	3.3

The African American sample consisted of 12 Registered Nurses (40.0%), two Licensed Practical Nurses (6.7%), five Registered Therapists (16.7%), seven Care Partners (23.3%), two Unit Secretaries (6.7%), and two in the Other category (6.7%). The Caucasian sample consisted of 19 Registered Nurses (63.3%), two Licensed Practical Nurses (6.7%), five Registered Therapists (16.7%), two Care

Partners (6.7%), two Unit Secretaries (6.7%), and zero participants were in the

Other category.

Table 2

Occupation/Position

Position	African American		Caucasian	
	f	%	f	%
RN	12	40.0	19	63.3
LPN	2	6.7	2	6.7
RT	5	16.7	5	16.7
CP	7	23.3	2	6.7
Unit Secretary	2	6.7	2	6.7
Other	2	6.7	0	0

The breakdown of educational level showed that none of the African

American women held Master's degrees, six held Bachelor's degrees (20.0%), 12

held Associate's degrees (40.0%), five held professional certifications (16.7%),

and seven held high school diplomas (23.3%). Of the Caucasian women, one

held a Master's degree (3.3%), eight held Bachelor's degrees (26.7%), 12 held

Associate's degrees (40.0%), five held professional certifications (16.7%) and

three held high school diplomas (10.0%).

Table 3

Education

Education Level	African American		Caucasian	
	F	%	F	%
Master's	0	0	1	3.3
Bachelor's	6	20.0	8	26.7
Associate's	12	40.0	12	40.0
Certification	5	16.7	5	16.7
High School	7	23.3	3	10.0

Instrument

The study consisted of two sets of survey questions. The first set of questions, developed Pierce and Harris (1993) was used to analyze personal experience and involvement in a battering situation. These six Yes or No questions consisted of such statements as "I have never been involved in or observed a battering incident," and "I have observed members of my extended family being abused." This portion of the survey was to determine each woman's perception of domestic violence. (See Appendix B.)

The survey questions to measure attitudes toward domestic violence utilized in this study were developed by Moss Aubrey. The survey questions were presented in a study by Aubrey in 1988 that was utilized to determine if Battered Women Syndrome can be applied to women who are on trial for killing their batterers. The survey was also used to determine if common myths held by society about battered women were also common in the court system.

The survey included a hypothetical scenario and attitude test (see Appendix C) describing a domestic violence incident. The answers, True and False, were tallied using 1 to represent True and 0 to represent False. The data was collected and tallied. The procedures used to analyze the data were descriptive statistics and Chi-Square. Sample True and False statement regarding the scenario included "Couple has serious marital problems" and "She could prevent battering by counseling."

Aubrey's (1988) survey was administered to 60 women, 30 Black and 30 White, at an area hospital. The survey questions were selected to determine the

similarities and/or differences in attitude toward domestic violence between the group of women.

Procedure

A survey was conducted consisting of a demographic questionnaire, personal experience and involvement in a battering situation (Pierce and Harris, 1993), and an attitude assessment instrument (Aubrey 1989). This study was given during two 12-hour shifts at an area hospital in St. Louis. There were 60 copies of the survey which were divided equally in half, and placed in two long yellow envelopes labeled "African American" and "Caucasian."

During the first day of distributing the survey, women in the Respiratory Department were asked to participate in the study. The women were advised that the survey was confidential and no names were needed. The two groups of women, Black and White, were seated at a table. The reason for the study was not explained so as not to influence the results, but the topic of the survey was revealed and the women were informed that their answers to the survey would remain confidential. They were also told that the survey would not take long to complete, to eliminate the concern for time limitations.

The survey was then passed out to each woman. The author sat at the table as each woman read and answered each question, and made comments about the question after reading the scenario. The survey completion time was approximately three to five minutes. Afterwards, the survey was collected, and each one replaced in the envelope according to race.

During the latter part of the evening, the author approached several nurses' stations that had women working in varying job positions and who had different educational levels. They were asked if they would participate in a study. The reason for the survey was not explained in detail, but what the survey contained was revealed. It was explained that the survey was confidential, anonymous and not time-consuming, to alleviate any fears or concerns the participants may have had.

Each survey was given at various nurses' stations in the hospital to obtain a diverse sample. Over half of the survey was taken during "down time," when employees were taking their breaks. Women were sitting, standing and leaning over counters to read and answer questions while the author stood by and watched. Again, the participants read and made comments about the questions after reading the scenario.

On the second day, the author repeated the same process so employees who were not present the day before could participate in the survey.

Chapter IV

Results

The subjects participating in the survey were required answer six yes/no

questions regarding personal experience or involvement in a battering situation

(Aubrey & Ewing, 1989). In the African American group, more than half

(53.3%) had never been involved in or observed a battery incident, compared to

less than half (40.0%) of the Caucasian women. However, a similar percentage of

the sample, 83.3% of the African American Women and 82.8% of the Caucasian

women, have heard about heard about a battery incident from acquaintances.

Similarly, 27.6% of both the African American and Caucasian samples had been a

victim of a battery incident. In terms of having observed domestic violence in the

family, 20.7% of the African American women had observed their parents in a

battery incident, compared to 33.3% of the Caucasian women. A large number

(43.3%) of the African American women had observed members of their extended

family being abused, compared to 20.0% of the Caucasian women. In addition,

33.3% of the African American women had observed neighbors being abused,

compared to 37.9% of the Caucasian women.

(See Table 4, next page.)

Table 4

Frequency and Percentage of Subjects Agreeing with Statements Regarding
Personal Experience or Involvement in a Battery Situation

Statement	African American		Caucasian		X^2
	f	%	f	%	
Never involved in or observed a battery incident.	16	53.3	12	40.0	1.071
Heard about a battery incident from acquaintances.	25	83.3	24	82.8	0.003
Have been a victim of a battery incident.	8	27.6	8	26.7	0.006
Have observed my parents in a battery incident.	6	20.7	10	33.3	1.193
Have observed neighbors being abused.	10	33.3	11	37.9	0.136
Have observed members of my extended family being abused.	13	43.3	6	20.0	3.774

a. Computed for 2X2 table.
b. Cells have expected count less than five.

After responding to the questions regarding personal experience or
involvement in a battering situation, subjects had to read a scenario related to
domestic violence and answer eight true/false questions related to the scenario
(Aubrey & Ewing, 1989). The survey results revealed that a high percentage of
participants in both groups saw the couple as having serious marital problems; 25
of the African Americans (83.3%) and 27 of the Caucasian women (90%).
Eleven of the African American women (36.7%) believed that the battery was an
isolated incident, compared to only six of the Caucasian women (20.0%). Those
who thought the victim should bear some responsibility for the incident numbered
5 for the African American women (16.7), and only one for the Caucasian women
(3.3%). The majority of participants believed that the victim could escape the
situation; 21 of the African American (70.0%) participants felt this way, and 17 of

the Caucasian women (56.7%) also agreed. Only four of the African American women (13.8%) felt the victim was masochistic if she remained in the relationship, and two of the Caucasian women (6.7%) agreed. However, nine of the African American women (30.0%) felt the victim was emotionally disturbed if she remained in the relationship, while six of the Caucasian (20.0%) women felt she was. Most of the results indicated that the African American and Caucasian women felt similarly about the above statements.

There was a slight difference of opinion regarding the statement that the victim could stay and prevent battery by relying on the police; three of the African American women (10.0%) agreed with this statement, compared to zero of the Caucasian women. There was a significantly larger difference of opinion during the survey regarding the statement that addressed counseling; 14 of the African American women (48.3%) thought that the victim could prevent battering through counseling, while only four of the Caucasian women (14.8%) agreed. (See Table 5, next page.)

Table 5

Attitude Test Scenario Results

Statement	African American				Caucasian				X^2
	Nf	%	Nf	%	Nf	%	Nf	%	
Couple has serious marital problems.	6	16.7	25	83.3	3	10.0	27	90.0	.577
Battery is an isolated incident	19	63.3	11	36.7	24	80.0	6	20.0	2.052
Victim bears some responsibility.	25	83.3	5	16.7	29	96.7	1	3.3	2.963
Victim could simply leave if she is afraid.	9	30.0	21	70.0	13	43.3	17	56.7	1.148
If victim remains, she is masochistic.	25	86.2	4	13.8	28	93.3	2	6.7	.820
If she remains, she is emotionally disturbed.	21	70.0	9	30.0	24	80.0	6	20.0	.800
She could prevent battery by counseling.	15	51.7	14	48.3	25	86.2	4	13.8	8.056
Victim could stay and prevent battery by relying on police	27	90.0	3	10.0	30	100	0	0	3.158

Chapter V

Discussion

The study revealed more similarities than differences between African American and Caucasian women in their attitude toward domestic violence. However, literature and societal views often indicate a difference between the African American and White American culture regarding this issue.

The results of this study reflected that African Americans and Caucasians equally (27.6%) have been a victim of a battery incident. In addition, 43.3% of African Americans have observed a member of their extended family being abused, compared to 20.0% of White American women. Regarding this issue, a higher percentage of African Americans were exposed to domestic violence than their White counterparts. This exposure to abusive behavior for African American women may have influenced their expectation of what a relationship should represent to them.

In analyzing the statements following the scenario, there was essentially no difference between the two groups in the way they perceived the scenario. There was one exception to this. Of the African Americans, 48.3% believed that the women in the scenario could prevent battery by counseling, compared to 86.2% of the White American women who believed that counseling would not help the victim in preventing the abuse. The literature revealed that African American women are often seen as showing little belief in counseling as a means to prevent domestic violence; they tend to depend upon their extended family and friends for support. According to the literature, they believed that economic

survival was more important than building self esteem through counseling (Coley & Beckett, 1988). However, this study reflected that African American women placed some value in counseling. The overwhelming surprise was that neither group seemed to really believe that the women could stay and prevent battery by relying on the police.

Research Limitations

One limitation in conducting this survey was that the sample size of the participants was rather small. Further research should be conducted with a larger sample of African American and White American women.

Another limitation was that the study was conducted at an area hospital, limiting the opportunity to obtain a broader perception by using participants in varied occupations. In addition, the study was limited to female participants. It would be interesting to also obtain input from men regarding the issue of domestic violence. Also, there was a very small percentage of women over the age of 58 who participated in the study. It would also be interesting to obtain the broader view of older women regarding their perception of domestic violence.

Research Recommendations

Future research is needed to better define the validity of the instrument utilized in this study. Researchers need to clarify concepts related to the measurement of attitudes, in order for society to gain a better awareness and understanding of domestic violence. Additional research with a more diverse range of subjects, with varying backgrounds, occupations and educational levels

is needed. This study was limited to a small group at one location, and a broader range of subjects would increase the validity of the study.

Conclusion

This study found more similarities than differences between the two groups in how they viewed domestic violence. The primary differences in the participants' responses were regarding the statements that addressed counseling and police intervention as means of preventing domestic violence. Previous literature had shown that African American women held a low opinion of counseling; however, this study revealed that more African American women than White American women believed that counseling would be beneficial. Also, more African American women than Caucasian women believed that the victim could prevent battery by relying on the police.

The other difference regarding the background and personal experience of the test subjects was that over twice as many African American women had witnessed an extended family member being abused. Perhaps this is the reason that a slightly lower percentage of African American women had been in abusive relationships than the White American women; they were more aware of abuse and domestic violence through their own observations.

This study revealed that women need to be aware of how stereotyping and societal myths can affect the core of family. With society constantly changing, it is important for the younger generation to be aware of the negative impact of stereotyping other ethnic groups. People also need to be cognizant of how the media can negatively portray and stereotype other ethnic

groups.   By doing so, perhaps people will begin to realize how negative

stereotyping hurts and affects everyone.

APPENDIX A

DEMOGRAPHIC STUDY

Dear Participant:

I am a graduate student at Lindenwood University. I am conducting a study on Domestic Violence. The study is being done to complete my thesis.

Your participation is greatly appreciated. No names are required and answers are anonymous.

Please take a moment to read all of the information and answer the questions. If you need further directions, please do not hesitate to ask.

Age:
      18-27 _____
      28-37 _____
      38-47 _____
      58 and over _____

Race:
      African American _____
      Caucasian _____
      Other _____

Demographic Area:
      St. Louis City _____
      St. Louis County _____
      Other _____

Position:
      RN _____   Care Partner _____
      LPN _____   Unit Secretary _____
      Respiratory Therapist _____   Housekeeper _____
                                   Other _____

Highest Educational Degree Earned:
      Doctorate _____   Associate's _____
      Master's _____   Certification _____
      Bachelor's _____   High School _____

APPENDIX B

Personal Experience or Involvement in a Battering Situation:

1.　I have never been involved in or observed a battering incident.

　　　Yes ＿＿＿　　　　　　No ＿＿＿

2.　I have heard about a battering incident from acquaintances.

　　　Yes ＿＿＿　　　　　　No ＿＿＿

3.　I have been a victim of a battering incident.

　　　Yes ＿＿＿　　　　　　No ＿＿＿

4.　I have observed my parents in a battering incident.

　　　Yes ＿＿＿　　　　　　No ＿＿＿

5.　I have observed neighbors being abused.

　　　Yes ＿＿＿　　　　　　No ＿＿＿

6.　I have observed members of my extended family being abused.

　　　Yes ＿＿＿　　　　　　No ＿＿＿

Directions:

　　Please take a moment to read the scenario on Page A. After reading the scenario, answer the questions on Page B. Please circle whether you believe the statement is true or false.

APPENDIX C

SCENARIO

Robert and Francine were married in 1970. For the eight years of their marriage, Robert worked as a steelworker while Francine stayed home to raise their three children. In February of 1978, Robert was laid off from his job. For the first time since their marriage, Francine was forced to go to work while her husband remained at home. As the months passed by, Francine noticed a gradual change in Robert. He became moody and argumentative. Hoping things would improve, Francine continued working and hoped that Robert would get a lucky break.

In March of 1979, Francine was promoted to a managerial position. That evening after work, she celebrated with a few friends. When she arrived home, she found Robert waiting for her. Before she had a chance to announce the good news, Robert accused her of cheating and threw her to the floor. She lay there, stunned and ashamed. Robert became tearful and apologetic, and swore that he would never hurt Francine again. Francine forgave Robert (Aubrey & Ewing, 1989).

ATTITUDE TEST

1.	Couple has serious marital problems	True	False
2.	The battering is an isolated event.	True	False
3.	The victim bears some responsibility.	True	False
4.	Victim could simply leave even if she is afraid.	True	False
5.	If victim remains, she is masochistic.	True	False
6.	If she remains, she is emotionally disturbed.	True	False
7.	She could prevent battering by counseling.	True	False
8.	Victim could stay and prevent battering by relying on police.	True	False

Your participation is greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

Paula Ellis

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