Much of history has documented the presence of violence within relationships. Throughout history, women were considered the property of men. Wife beating was a legal and accepted form of discipline of women by their husbands. During ancient Roman times, men were allowed to beat their wives with “a rod or switch as long as its circumference is no greater than the girth of the base of the man’s right thumb” (Stevenson & Love, 1999, table 1, 753 B.C.). The “rule of thumb” continued as a guiding principle of legalized wife beating throughout early European history and appeared in English common-law practices, which influenced the legal structures of the early settlers in America. While small movements against wife beating appeared in the United States throughout the 18th and 19th century, it was not until 1871 that Alabama and Massachusetts became the first states to take away the legal right of men to beat their wives. However, significant resistance still existed in many states on the grounds that the government should not interfere in the family environment. In 1882, wife beating became a crime in the state of Maryland. While defining wife beating as a crime meant that the act would receive criminal consequences, the enforcement of the act as a crime was limited, and husbands rarely received any significant penalties for their actions.

The rise of the feminist movement in the late 1960s and early 1970s gave a foundation for the battered women’s movement. Shelters and counseling programs began to appear throughout the United States during the 1970s; however, these efforts were small in scale, and the need for assistance significantly outweighed the availability of
services. While police officers across the nation began to receive training about domestic violence calls for service, most departments had a nonarrest policy toward cases of domestic violence, because many officers saw their role as a peacemaker or interventionist rather than as an agent of criminal justice. In these cases, homicide rates continued to increase because of the murders of women at the hands of their intimate partners, and more officers were dying in the line of duty responding to domestic violence calls.

The grassroots battered women’s movement of the 1970s led to systemic changes in how the police and courts handled cases of domestic violence. Many of these changes occurred in response to research findings by the Minneapolis Domestic Violence Experiment (MDVE). The MDVE illustrated that when an arrest was made in a misdemeanor domestic violence incident, recidivism rates were significantly lower compared to cases in which police simply “counseled” the aggressor (Sherman & Berk, 1984). Many departments ushered in new policies based on these findings. However, replication studies did not produce similar experiences and instead indicated that arresting the offender led to increases in violence.

Throughout the 1980s, state and nonprofit task forces assembled to discuss the issues of intimate partner abuse. By 1989, the United States had over 1,200 programs for battered women and provided shelter housing to over 300,000 women and children each year (Dobash & Dobash, 1992; Stevenson & Love, 1999). In 1994, Congress passed the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) as part of the Federal Crime Victims Act. The VAWA provided funding for battered women’s shelters and outreach education, as well as funding for domestic violence training for police and court personnel. It also provided the opportunity for victims to sue for civil damages as a result of violent acts perpetrated against them. In 1995, the Office on Violence Against Women (OVW) was created within the U.S. Department of Justice and today is charged with administering grant programs aimed at research and community programming toward eradicating intimate domestic and intimate partner abuse in our communities (Office on Violence Against Women [OVW], n.d.). Table 4.1 highlights the allocation of resources and the provision of services through the different reauthorizations of the Violence Against Women Act.

Defining and Identifying Intimate Partner Abuse

A number of different terms have been used to identify acts of violence against women. Many of these descriptions fall short in capturing the multifaceted nature of these abusive acts. The term wife battering fails to identify cases of violence outside of marriage, such as violent relationships between cohabitating individuals, dating violence, or even victims who were previously married to their batterer. Excluding these individuals from the official definition of battered often denies these victims any legal protections or services. The most common term used in recent history is domestic violence. However, this term combines the crime of woman battering with other contexts of abuse found within a home environment, such as the abuse of children or grandparents. Today, many scholars and community activists prefer the term intimate partner abuse (IPA) because it captures any form of abuse between individuals who currently have, or have previously had, an intimate relationship (Belknap, 2007). However, the use of these terms can vary significantly between different research studies, which can make it difficult to understand the extent of these victimizations. For example, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention defines intimate partner abuse as “physical, sexual or psychological harm by a current or former partner or spouse” (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC], n.d., para. 1). Meanwhile, the National Violence Against Women survey extended the definition of intimate partner abuse to include cases of rape/sexual assault, physical assault, and stalking behaviors. Other agencies such as the Bureau of Justice Statistics (2006) include additional crimes within the discussion of IPA, such as homicides and robberies involving intimate partners (Catalano, 2012).

According to the National Crime Victimization Survey, an estimated 1.3 million women are physically victimized each year by a current or former intimate partner. In the majority of cases, men are the aggressor and women are
Table 4.1  • The Violence Against Women Act

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Legislation</th>
<th>Key Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
Title IV—Violence Against Women | • Allocated $1.6 billion in grant funds (1994–2000) for investigation and prosecution of violent crimes against women, community services for victims, and the creation of domestic violence helplines  
• Created new laws that target violators of civil restraining orders and that make interstate domestic violence a federal crime  
• Allows offenders to use civil justice in cases that prosecutors decline to prosecute  
• Established the Office on Violence Against Women within the Department of Justice |
| 2000   | Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act of 2000  
Division B—Violence Against Women Act | • Allocated $3.33 billion in grant funds (2001–2005)  
• Enhanced federal laws for domestic violence and stalking  
• Added protections for immigrant victims  
• Added new programs for elderly and disabled victims  
• Included victims of dating violence into VAWA protections and services |
• Created repeat offender penalties  
• Added protections for trafficked victims  
• Provides housing resources for victims  
• Enhanced resources for American Indian and Alaska Native populations  
• Provides increased training for health care providers to recognize signs of domestic violence  
• Enhanced protections for illegal immigrant victims |
• Continues funding for grants for research and services  
• Maintains and expands housing protections  
• Expands options for tribal courts to address domestic violence  
• Requires reporting procedures for dating violence on college campuses  
• Prohibits discrimination for LGBT victims in accessing services  
• Maintains and increases protections for immigrant victims |

Women, Gender, and Crime: Core Concepts

Much of the abuse within an intimate relationship occurs behind closed doors and is not visible to the community. This makes it difficult for researchers to measure the extent of these acts or for community agencies to provide outreach and services for victims. Many are reluctant to report cases of abuse to anyone (police, friends, or family members) due to the high levels of shame that they feel as a result of the abuse. Others believe that the police will be unable to help. This belief is not unfounded. Research indicates that in some cases, the police scolded victims for not following through on previous court cases. Other victims were either blamed for causing the violence or were told to fix the relationship with the offender (Fleury-Steiner, Bybee, Sullivan, Belknap, & Melton, 2006).

Most people think of physical battering/abuse as the major component of intimate partner abuse. However, abuse between intimates runs much deeper than physical violence. Perhaps one of the most common (and some would argue the most damaging in terms of long-term abuse and healing) is emotional abuse. Those who batter their partner emotionally may call them derogatory names, prevent them from working or attending school, or limit access to family members and friends. An abuser may control the finances and limit access and information regarding money, which in turn makes the victim dependent on the perpetrator. Emotional abuse is a way in which perpetrators seek to control their victims, whether it be in telling them what to wear, where to go, or what to do. They may act jealous or possessive of their partner. In many cases, emotional abuse turns violent toward the victim, child(ren), or pet(s). Following acts of physical or sexual violence, the emotional abuse continues when a batterer blames the victim for the violent behavior by suggesting that “she made him do it” or by telling the victim that “you deserve it.” Research indicates that emotional abuse is more common with younger males and females and women are more likely to experience social isolation and property damage within the context of emotional abuse compared to men (Karakurt & Silver, 2013). Emotional abuse is particularly damaging because it robs the victim of her self-esteem and self-confidence. In many cases, victims fail to identify that they are victims of intimate partner abuse if they do not experience physical violence. Yet the scars left by emotional abuse are significant and long lasting. Unfortunately, few laws characterize the acts of emotional abuse as a criminal offense.

Economic abuse is another tool in which perpetrators of intimate partner abuse try and control their partner. Economic abuse involves acts that damage the victim’s ability to be self-sufficient. It can also serve as a way to make it difficult for a victim to leave their batterer. Economic abuse includes acts such as restricting access to the family’s bank account or prohibiting individuals from having their own bank account. This also extends to both jeopardizing one’s employment status or prohibiting them from working, which only makes the individual more dependent on their abuser. While much of the research has looked at economic abuse from a very narrow view (and as such, the available data posits that such

Photo 4.1 Intimate partner violence is composed of a variety of different behaviors used by an offender to have power and control over their victim. These include physical, sexual, emotional, and psychological abuse.

Given that the majority of data find men as the perpetrator and women as the victim, this text generally uses the term he to refer to the abuser and the term she as the victim. The use of these terms is not meant to ignore male victims of violence or abuse within same-sex relationships but only to characterize the majority of cases of intimate partner abuse.
abuse is rare), recent studies have attempted to increase the measurements of this phenomenon. These findings acknowledge that economic abuse is just as common as physical and emotional abuse (Postmus, Plummer, & Stylianou, 2015).

For a small number of women, physical violence in an intimate relationship escalates to murder. For these women, death was the culmination of a relationship that had been violent over time, and in many cases, the violence occurred on a frequent basis. The presence of a weapon significantly increases the risk of homicide, because women who are threatened or assaulted with a gun or other weapon are 20 times more likely to be killed (Campbell et al., 2003). Three-fourths of intimate partner homicide victims had tried to leave their abusers, refuting the common question of “why doesn’t she leave?” While many of these women had previously sought help and protection from their batterers’ abuse, their efforts failed (Block, 2003).

### Spotlight on IPA and the NFL

In Chapter 2, you learned about the case of Ray Rice, who was suspended from the NFL for a domestic incident involving his then fiancée, Janay Rice. However, this is not the only incident of intimate partner abuse involving a football star. In fact, there are several active players that have a history of domestic violence. Between 2000 and 2014, there were 83 domestic violence arrests involving 80 players. Given that there are a maximum of 53 players on each of the 32 teams, this means that approximately 20% of all players in the NFL have a history of domestic violence. Indeed, cases of this nature make up 55.4% of all arrests within the league (McCann, 2014).

Brandon Marshall, who most recently played for the New York Jets, has had nine reported incidents related to intimate partner abuse and has been arrested on three separate occasions. In 2007, he was arrested on suspicion of domestic violence against his then girlfriend (Rasheedah Watley) and was arrested in 2009 for disorderly conduct during a fight with his fiancée (Michi Nogami-Campbell). In 2011, Marshall was stabbed by Nogami-Campbell, who claimed that she was acting in self-defense. During that same year, Marshall was diagnosed with borderline personality disorder. His most recent incident was in 2012, when he was accused of striking a woman at a club in New York City. None of these incidents led to a criminal conviction, though he was suspended for one game by the NFL in 2008. Since then, he has made several public appearances related to domestic violence awareness and prevention to speak out about his actions and history with violence. As a free agent, he is being considered by teams such as the Baltimore Ravens, which has not drafted or signed anyone with a history of domestic violence since the events involving Ray Rice in 2014 (Hensley, 2017). In the first 3 months of 2017, there were two cases involving arrests of active players for intimate partner violence: Ethan Westbrooks and Rodney Astin. Westbrooks, who was most recently a defensive tackle with the LA Rams, was booked on suspicion of domestic violence stemming from an incident with the mother of his child. While the charges were ultimately dropped, Westbrooks remains a free agent (McAtee, 2017). A third incident involved Trent Richardson (last played for the Ravens in 2014). Richardson was arrested and charged with third-degree domestic violence in Alabama (Sports Illustrated, 2017).

In August 2014, NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell sent a letter to all team owners about a new disciplinary policy within the National Football League in cases of intimate partner abuse and sexually based offenses. Any player that is arrested and charged with one of these offenses must undergo a personal evaluation, which could include a requirement for counseling or other services. Players would also be suspended without pay for six games. Subsequent offenses would result in a banishment from the NFL, though a player could apply for reinstatement after one year (Pelissero, 2014). However, the policy appears to be applied unevenly. Since its introduction, the six-game policy has only been applied in two of the eighteen allegations of domestic violence. Former Detroit Lions offensive lineman Rodney Austin was found guilty on domestic violence charges following a fight with his girlfriend. While he was suspended by the league (and was released by the Lions), Exekiel Elliott (Dallas Cowboys) and Ra’Shede Hageman (Atlanta Falcons) were both allowed to continue to play during the 2016–2017 post-season despite pending investigations (Pilon, 2017).
The Cycle of Violence

The greatest tool of perpetrators of intimate partner abuse is their ability to have power and control over their victim. To explain how violence and abuse occurs in an intimate relationship, Lenore Walker (1979) conceptualized the **cycle of violence**. The cycle of violence is made up of three distinct time frames (see Figure 4.1). The first is referred to as tension building, where a batterer increases control over a victim. As anger begins to build for the perpetrator, the victim tries to keep her partner calm. She also minimizes any problems in the relationship. During this time, the victim may feel as though she is walking on eggshells because the tension between her and her partner is high. It is during the second time frame, referred to as the abusive incident, where the major incident of battering occurs. During this period, the batterer is highly abusive, and engages in an act of violence toward the victim. Following the abusive incident, the perpetrator moves to stage three, which is often described as the honeymoon period. During this stage, the offender is apologetic to the victim for causing harm. He often is loving and attentive and promises to change his behavior. In this stage, the perpetrator is viewed as sincere and in many cases is forgiven by the victim. Unfortunately, the honeymoon phase does not last forever, and in many cases of intimate partner abuse, the cycle begins again, tensions increase, and additional acts of violence occur. Over time, the honeymoon stage may disappear entirely.

---

**Figure 4.1 • The Cycle of Violence**

*Source: Adapted from Women, Gender, and Crime: Core Concepts, 2nd ed., by K. Chaiken and C. Rennison. Copyright © 2019 by SAGE Publications, Inc. This work may not be reproduced or distributed in any form or by any means without express written permission of the publisher.*
Victims of Intimate Partner Abuse

Intimate partner abuse can impact victims of any sex, age, race, ethnicity, religion, nationality, and sexual orientation. Offenders who perpetuate these acts of violence are spouses, intimates (boyfriend/girlfriend, cohabitating partners), and ex-intimates. This chapter highlights some of the different relationship types and populations where IPA occurs. The chapter also includes a discussion of the challenges that victims face within intimate partner abuse.

Dating Violence

While initial laws on intimate partner abuse recognized only physical violence between married couples, recent laws have been changed to reflect the variety of relationship types where intimate partner abuse can occur. One such example is dating violence. Even though two people are unmarried and may or may not be living together, such relationships are not immune from violence. Prevalence rates of dating violence vary. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention High School Youth Risk Behavior Survey, 11.7% of girls and 7.4% of boys have experienced physical violence within a dating relationship. Sexual violence in a dating relationship also impacts 15.6% of girls and 5.4% of boys (CDC, 2015). In contrast, research on dating violence on college campuses indicates that 32% of students report a history of dating violence in a previous relationship, and 21% of students indicate that they currently experience violence in their dating relationship (Sellers & Bromley, 1996). Similar results are noted from Copp, Giordano, Longmore, & Manning (2015) who found that 35% of youth had experienced some form of violence in either their current or most recent dating relationship. Teens, in particular, are at high risk for dating violence as a result of their inexperience in relationships and their heightened views of “romantic love,” combined with a desire to be independent from their parents (Alabama Coalition Against Domestic Violence [ACADV], n.d.). Given the severity of this issue, it is concerning that few parents believe that dating violence is a significant issue for their children (Women's Health, 2004). The early onset of violence and abuse in a relationship continues for victims into adulthood, because adolescent victims often find themselves in a pattern of abusive relationships as adults (Silverman, Raj, Mucci, & Hathaway, 2001).

Children of Intimate Partner Abuse

Children are significantly affected by violence within the home environment, even if they are not the direct victims of the abuse. Research indicates that 68% to 87% of incidents involving intimate partner abuse occur while children are present (Raphael, 2000). One battered woman spoke of the effects this victimization has on children: “Our kids have problems dealing with us. When we argue and fight in front of them, when they see our husbands humiliating, beating, and cursing us, they will get affected. They will learn everything they see” (Sullivan, Senturia, Negash, Shiu-Thornton, & Giday, 2005, p. 928).

Children who reside in a home where violence is present tend to suffer from a variety of negative mental health outcomes, such as feelings of low self-worth, depression, and anxiety. Affected children often suffer in academic settings and have higher rates of aggressive behavior (Goddard & Bedi, 2010). Additionally, many children exposed to violence at a young age continue the cycle of violence into adulthood, because they often find themselves in violent relationships of their own. Research indicates that 30% of young boys who are exposed to acts of intimate partner abuse will engage in violence against an intimate partner later in life. In an effort to respond to families in need, many agencies that advocate for victims of intimate partner violence are connecting with child welfare agencies to provide a continuum of care for children and their families. However, it is important for agencies to make sure that they do not overemphasize this risk factor and label these children as potential offenders and victims, because it could lead to a self-fulfilling prophecy (Boyd, 2001).
LGBTQ and Intimate Partner Abuse

While the majority of intimate partner abuse involves a female victim and a male offender, data indicate that battering also occurs in same-sex relationships. The National Crime Victimization survey found that 3% of females who experienced IPA were victimized by another woman, while 16% of male victims were abused by their male counterpart (Catalano, 2007). However, these official statistics may not necessarily reflect the reality of this issue. Research on teen dating violence note that LGBTQ youth have significantly higher rates compared to heterosexual youth. Figure 4.2 highlights data for dating violence for LGBTQ and heterosexual youth. Is same-sex IPA a rare phenomenon (as official data may suggest), or is this issue more common yet hidden within this community? Like heterosexual victims of intimate partner abuse, many same-sex victims are reluctant to report their abuse. The decision to report same-sex IPA involves the same challenges as a heterosexual battering relationship. But these challenges are enhanced for LGBT victims because it exposes their sexual orientation to police, community organizations, peers, and family members (Irwin, 2008).

Research indicates that female victims of same-sex intimate partner abuse face many of the same risk factors for violence as heterosexual battering relationships. Figure 4.3 presents the power and control wheel for the LGBTQ community. While heterosexual IPA relationships face many of these same factors such as economic abuse, emotional abuse, and coercion, this figure adds factors such as heterosexism, external homophobia, and internalized homophobia as (further) influences on LGBTQ IPA relationships. For some victims, these additional factors can complicate their efforts to find support within the LGBTQ community. As one victim notes, “I think that people are very afraid to add to (the stigma of being queer) by saying . . . not only are we queer but we also have violence in our relationships and in our community” (Bornstein, Fawcett, Sullivan, Senturia, & Shiu-Thornton, 2006, p. 169). In addition, the connection that an IPA victim has to the LGBTQ community (or lack thereof) can also play a role in disclosure practices. For example, women who experienced abuse within the context of their first lesbian

Figure 4.2 - Dating Violence by Sexual Orientation

![Figure 4.2](https://example.com/figure42.png)

**Percentage of Youth Who Experienced Dating Violence**

- Physical dating violence
- Psychological dating abuse
- Cyber dating abuse
- Sexual coercion

relationship tended to express fear about discrimination. Since many of these victims lacked a connection to the LGBTQ community, some wondered whether the abuse was a normal component of a lesbian relationship. This fear of being “outed” also led some victims to stay in the relationship for a longer period of time (Irwin, 2008). In comparison, women who had strong networks or attachments with the LGBTQ community were more likely to seek out help when their relationships turned violent (Hardesty, Oswald, Khaw, & Fonseca, 2011).

Given that LGBTQ victims of intimate partner abuse are in the minority, few programs and services exist to meet the unique needs of this population. In addition, resources that are often available to heterosexual victims of

Figure 4.3 • Lesbian/Gay Power and Control Wheel

SOURCE: Developed by Roe & Jagodinsky, Texas Council on Family Violence. Adapted from the Power & Control and Equity Wheels developed by the Domestic Abuse Intervention Project.
IPA are expressly denied for the LGBTQ population. Three states have explicitly denied LGBT victims from seeking out a protective order in cases involving IPA (Montana, Louisiana, and South Carolina). Only one state (Hawaii) specifically includes language that allows LGBTQ individuals to seek out a restricting order against a current or former intimate. The remaining laws at the state level are silent on the issue because they neither permit nor exclude victims from seeking a restraining order. In these cases, the interpretation of the law is left up to the judiciary (American Bar Association Commission on Domestic Violence, 2008). Even service providers may view same-sex IPA incidents as less serious than cases of heterosexual IPA. This assumption can impact the level and type of services provided by an agency (Brown & Groscup, 2009). Effective programming needs to address the use of gender-role stereotypes when developing education and intervention efforts for the community. Agencies also need to develop “queer-specific” services to meet the needs for the LGBT community (Bornstein et al., 2006).

**Effects of Race and Ethnicity on Intimate Partner Abuse**

Issues of race and ethnicity add an additional lens through which one can view issues of intimate partner violence. While much of the early research on intimate partner violence focused exclusively on the relationships of gender inequality as a cause of abuse, the inclusion of race and ethnicity (and socioeconomic status) adds additional issues for consideration. For women of color, issues of gender inequality become secondary in the discussion of what it means to be a battered woman. Here, scholars acknowledge the role of cultural differences and structural inequality in understanding the experiences of IPV in ethnically diverse communities (Sokoloff, 2004). When investigating issues of violence among women of color, it is important that scholars not limit their discussions to race and ethnicity. Rather, research needs to reflect on the collision of a number of different factors, as “age, employment status, residence, poverty, social embeddedness, and isolation combine to explain higher rates of abuse within black communities—not race or culture per se” (Sokoloff, 2004, p. 141).

As a population, Black women are at an increased risk of being victimized in cases of intimate partner violence. Scholars are quick to point out that it is not race that affects whether one is more likely to be abused by a partner. Rather, economic and social marginalization can place women of color at an increased risk for victimization (West, 2004). Research by Potter (2007b) highlights how interracial abuse among Black women and men is related to feelings of being “devalued” by social stereotypes about “the Black man.” Since men of color experience high levels of discrimination by society, many victims justify the violent acts that are perpetuated by their intimate partner. This can also impact the decision to seek assistance from the criminal justice system as some women of color may not want to further criminalize the men in their communities, because they are already disproportionately represented within the correctional system (Nash, 2006).

Understanding issues of intimate partner violence in the Asian community presents a number of challenges. First, it is difficult to determine how prevalent the issue is, because most surveys collect data on Asian or Asian-American/Pacific Islanders within a single category and do not highlight some of the unique differences between the different ethnic groups that fall under this label. Such studies, such as the National Violence Against Women Survey, note that the lifetime rate of violence for this combined group is much lower than for other groups (Tjaden & Thoennes, 2006). Yet others have noted that Chinese Americans have higher rates of intimate partner violence compared to Vietnamese or Filipino Americans (Cho, 2012a). In addition, there are unique cultural issues within Asian communities that can make identifying and reporting intimate partner abuse as an act of violence difficult. This can make delivering services to this community particularly challenging (Yoshihama, Ramakrishnan, Hammock, & Khaliq, 2012).

Women who experience IPA may be faced with a multitude of physical and psychological issues, and race and ethnicity can affect whether a victim will seek out support and resources from social service agencies, such as therapeutic and shelter resources. Here, research indicates that Black women were significantly more likely to use emergency hospital services, police assistance, and housing assistance, compared to White and Hispanic/Latina women. For example, 65.4% of Black IPA females indicated that they had used housing assistance during the past year,
compared to only 26.9% of White IPA women and 7.7% of Hispanic/Latina IPA women (Lipsky, Caetano, Field, & Larkin, 2006). Meanwhile, Asian victims of IPA are also less likely to use mental health services than Latinas (Cho, 2012b). Women of color also express a need for culturally relevant support in their communities. For example, traditional therapeutic communities may be ineffective for some victims of violence: “Black folks don’t ‘do’ group. We ‘do’ church. . . . I will not sit there and [tell] all these White women my business. [Blacks] don’t talk about our stuff [in public]—and especially to White folks” (Nash, 2006, p. 1437).

**Unique Issues for Immigrant Victims of Intimate Partner Abuse**

While intimate partner abuse is an issue for any community, the effects are particularly significant for immigrant communities. Research indicates that men in these communities often batter their partner as a way to regain control and power in their lives, particularly when their immigrant status has deprived them of this social standing. Battering becomes a way in which these men regain their sense of masculinity. For many, the education and training they may have received in their home countries does not easily transfer on their arrival to the United States. As Bui and Morash (2008) note, “Vietnamese immigrant men have lost power after immigrating to the United States. Many felt bad because they lack[ed] language and occupational skills and could not support their families” (p. 202).

Faced with their husband’s inability to find a job to support the family, many immigrant women are faced with the need to work, which many immigrant men find to be in opposition to traditional cultural roles and a threat to their status within the family. This strain against traditional roles leads to violence. Many men blame the American culture for the gender clash occurring in their relationships. However, many women accept the violence as part of the relationship, because such behavior is considered normative for their culture. For example, violence is accepted behavior in Vietnamese traditional cultures, wherein men are seen as aggressive warriors and women are seen as passive and meek. Research on intimate partner violence within this community reveals high levels of verbal (75%), physical (63%), and sexual abuse (46%), with 37% experiencing both physical and sexual abuse (Bui & Morash, 2008). Within immigrant Asian communities, feelings of shame significantly impact the help-seeking behaviors. One woman characterizes these fears: “I do not share with others because if I share with someone, then that someone might tell another person who might happen to know my mother-in-law and so on. And the news will spread and it will bring bad name to my family” (Tonsing & Barn, 2016, p. 5).

For Ethiopian-immigrant women, the violent behavior of men is also accepted within the community, making it difficult for women to develop an understanding that battering is a crime and that they should seek out services. Help seeking is seen as a complaint by women, and in such cases, members of the community turn to support the perpetrator, not the victim (Sullivan et al., 2005). Intimate partner abuse is also discussed as a normal part of relationships for Russian-immigrant women. One woman stated that domestic violence “is part of the destiny, and you have to tolerate it” (Crandall, Senturia, Sullivan, & Shiu-Thornton, 2005, p. 945). These cultural expectations may inhibit women from seeking out assistance, because it would bring shame on the victim and her family, both immediate and extended. Strict gender-role expectations may lead women to believe that they do not have the right to disobey their partner, which legitimizes the abuse.

Many perpetrators use the fear of deportation to prevent victims from leaving an abusive relationship. Many Latina immigrant women are likely to remain in a battering relationship for a longer period of time due to fear surrounding their undocumented immigration status. In these cases, Latina immigrants are less likely to seek out help for intimate partner abuse compared to Latina nonimmigrants (Ingram, 2007). While the 2005 reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act increased the protection of immigrant women who are victims of a crime (including domestic violence), it is unclear how many immigrant women are aware of these protections.

Perpetrators often build on a negative experience of law enforcement from their home country in an effort to create a sense of distrust of the U.S. legal system. For many Vietnamese women, a call to the police for help was a last resort and often done not to facilitate an arrest but rather to improve the relationship between the perpetrator and the victim by stopping the violence. Most victims did not want to have their partner arrested or prosecuted for...
domestic violence but rather they wanted to send a message that the abuse was wrong. Unfortunately, many were reluctant to seek police intervention because they fear the civil implications that a criminal record would bring, particularly in jurisdictions with mandatory arrest policies (Bui, 2007).

Language barriers may also affect victims’ ability to seek help, because they may not be able to communicate with law enforcement and court personnel, particularly when resources for translators may be significantly limited (National Coalition Against Domestic Violence, n.d.). Lack of language skills, combined with a lack of understanding of the American legal system, also can prevent an immigrant/refugee woman from leaving her violent relationship. Not only may a victim not know what services are available; she may not understand how to navigate social systems, such as welfare and housing, and educational opportunities that are necessary in order to achieve economic independence from her batterer (Sullivan et al., 2005). In an effort to expand access to the courts in domestic violence cases, California amended its domestic violence laws in 2001 to ensure that legal documents in domestic violence cases would be made available in multiple languages. Today, paperwork to request a restraining order and other related documents is available in five different languages: English, Chinese, Spanish, Vietnamese, and Korean.2

---

**Spotlight on Intimate Partner Abuse in India**

Intimate partner abuse is a worldwide problem. Alas, issues such as patriarchy, power, and control know no geographical boundaries. In many countries, it is these values about women that exacerbate the abuse of women. Consider the case of India. As in many regions of the world, the marital relationship is considered private, and there are few laws against the abuse of women. Indeed, the cultural values reign supreme and essentially promote the power differential between men and women. It is some of these cultural indicators, such as the dowry and arranged marriages, that can encourage violence. For many families, the arranged marriage is an opportunity for the bride’s family to increase their social status within the community because they “marry up” their daughters.

The inability to provide an adequate dowry then serves as a trigger for the abuse. For these women, the abuse begins almost as soon as the marriage begins (44% indicate that it began within a month of the marriage), and it is a regular occurrence. Seventy-nine percent of the women reported abuse within their marriage on a daily basis and another 15.6% once every two days. In many cases, the violence comes not only from her husband but also her in-laws. Women were not only physically beaten (100%) but were also threatened by knives and other weapons (47.8%). Psychological violence was also a common tactic because they were forbidden from contacting their families, friends, and even their own children (82.2%; Panchanadeswaran & Koverola, 2005).

Given the cultural context for these abusive relationships, women seek help from a variety of sources. For those women who do leave these abusive relationships, community legal aid and counseling shelters are the most helpful in exiting an abusive situation. The police are essentially useless in dealing with these incidents. Meanwhile, families are only moderately helpful because they are caught up within maintaining their image in the community:

My parents and sister were very supportive and provided shelter from [sic] my daughter and me whenever we went. But after 3–4 days, my parents would always ask me to go back and try to reconcile with my husband. They were worried that if I stayed longer, he would not take me back . . . and the family honor will be affected, and I would be a stigma to the family and no one would marry my younger sister. (Panchanadeswaran & Koverola, 2005, p. 750)

---

2Each state has different policies on the availability of legal documents in languages other than English. Forms for the State of California are located at http://www.courtinfo.ca.gov.
Barriers to Leaving an Abusive Relationship

When hearing of cases of domestic violence, many members of the public ask, “Why doesn’t she just leave?” Leaving a relationship where intimate partner abuse is present is a difficult and complex process. There are many issues that a victim must face. One of the greatest barriers to leaving a battering relationship is the financial limitations that victims face. Women who lack economic self-sufficiency are less likely to report intimate partner abuse and less likely to leave the relationship. The support from extended family and friends can play a critical role in a victim’s ability to successfully depart from an abusive partner. However, these same individuals can increase the potential for victim blaming and a withdrawal of support and empathy if the victim returns to the relationship (Moe, 2007).

Inherent in the question of “why doesn’t she just leave?” is the question of “why does she stay?” This question places the responsibility on the victim for staying with a violent partner rather than focusing on why her partner chooses to be violent. The reality is that many women do leave their batterers. The average battered woman leaves seven to eight times before she is successful in leaving for good (ACADV, n.d.). Violence does not always end when women report their crimes or leave their abuser. For some women, the levels of violence increase; women who were separated from their batterers reported higher rates of violence, compared to women who were married or divorced from their batterer (Catalano, 2007). These acts of violence can involve not only the initial victim but also can spread out, placing children, friends, and extended family members of the woman at risk. Concerns regarding these potential increases in violence may influence these women to remain in the relationship out of concern for their loved ones.

For some women, their children are the reason why they leave an abusive situation and seek help. For some women, the desire to provide their children with a happy childhood was their motivation to leave. For others, it was to demonstrate that abusive and violent behaviors are not normal parts of a healthy relationship. One woman states: “I wouldn’t have left if it wasn’t for her because I saw the damage that I was . . . she was . . . going through and when she told me she was scared, that really explained why I try not to be scared of her father” (Stephens & Melton, 2016, p. 7). At the same time, the desire to maintain the family unit can also delay help-seeking behaviors.

I think they impact me a lot from the past because they love their dad and he is a good dad for them . . . I have always tried to keep my family together and it is really hard for them to be away from him. Like they cry for him and it hurts, you know, but I think this time, it’s just getting too bad. I don’t want them to end up seeing the violence. You know . . . I mean they can hear him call me names and stuff like that, you know, but they love their dad and so I think that’s a lot of the reason why I just stayed. (Stephens & Melton, 2016, p. 8)

Given that a significant portion of intimate partner abuse occurs in young adulthood, how do factors such as age and relationship status impact the decision to leave these relationships? It is interesting to note that the presence of physical violence did not impact the decision to stay in or leave a relationship for these youth. Rather, it was experiences with other negative relationship characteristics, such as emotional abuse or difficulties in communication that led to the ending of the relationship. The acceptance of the significant other by parents and peers also had an impact on this decision; those whose significant other was viewed favorably by their family and friends were more likely to stay, while negative perceptions were more likely to influence the decision to leave the relationship. Youth were also more likely to exit these relationships if they believed there was an opportunity to meet someone new.

In their search for support, some women may turn toward religious institutions for assistance in leaving a relationship characterized by intimate partner abuse. For many women, their faith gives them strength to leave (Wang, Horne, Levitt, & Klesges, 2009). Unfortunately, for some of these women, their spirituality may hinder their abilities to leave. Cultural scripts of some religious doctrines may encourage women to try to resolve the struggles of their relationship, because divorce and separation are not viewed as acceptable under the eyes of the church.
Here, congregations encourage women to forgive the violence that their partners display (Potter, 2007a). Additionally, clergy may be ill equipped to deal with the issue of intimate partner abuse within their congregations because of a lack of understanding of the realities of the problem and limited training on service and support needs (Shannon-Lewy & Dull, 2005).

Many women struggle with their decision to leave an abusive relationship. Some women may still love their partner, despite the violence that exists within the relationship. Others may hope that their partner will change and believe the promises made by their loved one for a different life. In some multicultural communities, there is a greater pressure outside of the family unit to return to one's batterer. Members of these communities often place significant pressures on victims to reunite with their batterer (Sullivan et al., 2005). For many women, they fear what their lives will be like without their partner. These fears may include how they will support themselves (and their children), the possibility that future relationships will have similar results, and even fear of loneliness. A key to successfully leaving an abusive relationship is the victim's belief that she will be better off without her batterer and have the confidence to make a new life free from violence.

**Victim Experiences With Police and Corrections**

As the criminal justice system becomes more involved in cases of intimate partner abuse, scholars have begun to ask questions about the victim experience with the criminal justice system. The findings of these studies vary. While some suggest that victims are satisfied by their experience with the police and courts in these cases, others highlight areas for significant improvement within the justice process.

The first step in asking for assistance often involves the police. The victim can either request the presence of the police or the police may be summoned on behalf of a victim, usually by a neighbor or other family member. Unlike cases where a third party reports the abuse, victims who initiate contact with the police are more likely to want to press charges against their assailant (Boivin & Leclerc, 2016). Research on this topic provides feedback on how victims feel about these interactions with the police. Women who felt that the officer listened to their concerns and provided information and referrals for help (such as shelters and other protective options) were the most satisfied with their experience with the police (Johnson, 2007). Gender of the responding officer also has an impact on victim satisfaction levels, because victims indicated that female officers were more receptive to their concerns overall and were not just focused on facilitating an arrest (Stalens & Finn, 2000). These positive experiences can encourage victims to seek out police assistance in the future should they need it (Johnson, 2007). There are also factors that can influence whether a case moves forward following a police report. If a perpetrator has a history of violent behavior, both the prosecutor and the victim are more likely to want to see the case move forward, whereas first-time offenders are more likely to have their charges dismissed or to be handled informally (Cerulli et al., 2015).

In contrast, women who do not feel that the justice system effectively responded to their concerns may be less likely to seek out help in the future. If an offender is let off with a “slap on the hand,” victims may experience
increased risks of violence in the future (Moe, 2007). Here, the criminal justice system did not serve as an effective deterrent for these offenders. This is also true in cases where the intimate partner abuse is limited to verbal abuse. Some women did not feel that the police took the issue of verbal violence seriously. At the same time, victims often minimized the severity of the verbal violence in order to discourage the police from making an arrest (Stewart, Langan, & Hannem, 2013). Negative experiences with the police can also contribute to experiences with posttraumatic stress disorder for victims of IPV (Srinivas & DePrince, 2015). However, failing to achieve a desired outcome with the criminal courts does not necessarily dissuade victims from seeking out other avenues such as emergency departments or the civil court for remedies such as protection orders (Cerulli, et al., 2015).

Drawing from criticisms regarding the discretionary arrest policies of many police departments, mandatory arrest or pro-arrest policies began to surface in police departments across the nation during the 1980s and 1990s. Mandatory arrest policies refer to the legal duty of a police officer to make an arrest if the officer has reason to believe that domestic violence has occurred. The laws vary from state to state, but most state laws recognize both current and previous spouses or cohabitants as protected categories under the law, though not all states cover dating or prior dating relationships. Currently, 22 states have some form of mandatory arrest policy in place. In addition, the laws vary when a mandatory arrest can be made. For example, laws in Alaska and Missouri require that a report be made within 12 hours of the assault, whereas Mississippi and Nevada extend the time frame to 24 hours. Washington State and South Dakota represent some of the most narrowly defined time frames and require that the police make an arrest within 4 hours of the assault. Washington State law is also unique in that it limits cases to individuals who are 16 or older (Hirschel, 2008).

The movement toward mandatory arrest clarified roles for officers when dealing with domestic violence calls for service. It also removed the responsibility of arrest from the victim's decision and onto the shoulders of police personnel. For many women, they believed that a mandatory arrest policy would make officers understand that domestic violence is a serious issue and that it would legitimize their victimization. At the same time, the threat of arrest would serve as a deterrent for the offender. Here, women believed that an arrest would decrease levels of violence and send a message to the offender that battering is a crime and he would be punished. However, they acknowledged that the decrease in violence was only a temporary measure and that there existed a possibility of increased violence after an offender returned to the family home following an arrest or court proceedings (Barata & Schneider, 2004; Moe, 2007). Victims can feel disempowered by the mandatory arrest process, because it takes away their decision-making abilities. While mandatory arrest policies removed the victim’s responsibility for instituting formal charges against an offender, there were some unintentional consequences. In many cases, a victim’s call to the police for help resulted in her own arrest, leaving many victims feeling betrayed by the system that they sought help from (Burgess-Proctor, 2012). Other victims may be less likely to call for intervention knowing that their batterer (or themselves) would be arrested (Gormley, 2007; Miller & Peterson, 2007).

Dual arrests are more likely to occur when state laws or policies do not include a primary aggressor designation. As a result, officers are required to make a determination about who the “real” offender is. Even with a primary aggressor designation, officers may lack the training or experience to make a professional judgment about whom to arrest, resulting in both parties being arrested. These dual-arrest practices result in women being arrested for domestic violence with their partner. As a result, many women victims find themselves labeled as offenders of IPA by police and the courts for engaging in acts of self-defense (Miller, 2005). Dual-arrest policies also have negative consequences for the LGBT community. Research by Hirschel et al. (2007) found that in cases of intimate partner violence, same-sex couples were more likely to be involved in dual-arrest situations (female-to-female = 26.1% and male-to-male = 27.3%) compared to heterosexual couples (3.8%).

The increase in arrests has far-reaching implications for women, including the refusal of help by shelter services and challenges in child custody battles as a result of their “criminal” history (Miller & Meloy, 2006). In addition, gender differences in battering impact programming options for women who engage in acts of IPA. Here, scholars have noted that traditional batterer intervention programming (which is designed primarily for male offenders)
may not be appropriate for women. Instead, therapeutic options should focus on the rationale and factors behind women who engage in IPA (Kernsmith, 2005).

In response to many mandatory arrest policies, many jurisdictions have instituted no-drop policies. Rather than force a victim to participate against her will, these jurisdictions developed evidence-based practices that would allow the prosecutor to present a case based on the evidence collected at the scene of the crime, regardless of any testimony by the victim (Gormley, 2007). Such policies were developed in response to a victim's lack of participation in the prosecution of her batterer. These policies may actually work against victims. When victims feel that their voice is not being heard by the criminal justice system, they may be less likely to report incidents of intimate partner abuse. While no-drop policies were designed to prevent victims from dismissing charges against their batterer, they instead led to disempowering victims.

When victims feel that the criminal justice system does not meet their needs in a case of intimate partner violence, they are less likely to seek assistance for subsequent victimizations. In many cases, victims felt that the event was not serious enough to report or expressed concerns that they would not be believed by the police. In addition, several victims were concerned about how contacting the police could lead to potential negative consequences for themselves or their families. Here, victims expressed concerns over the possibility of mandatory arrests or dual arrests (and the effects on children in the home), custody battles, and fear of how the offender would respond. Finally, even after multiple victimizations, some victims still express love and compassion for their abuser (Gover, Welton-Mitchell, Belknap, & Deprince, 2013).

Over time, many victims and advocates have expressed concern that the traditional criminal justice system may not be an effective tool to address the issues posed by intimate partner abuse. In response to these concerns, many jurisdictions have developed specialized courts that deal exclusively with cases of domestic violence. The professionals in these specialized courts (prosecutor, judges) often have specific training on issues such as the cycle of violence and the role of power and control within an intimate partner relationship. Research demonstrates that the use of specialized court practices can impact the level of satisfaction that victims experience as a result of their interactions with these environments. In their evaluation of a domestic violence court program in South Carolina, researchers Gover, Brank, and MacDonald (2007) found that a collaborative courtroom environment between the prosecutor, victim advocate, and judge had a significant effect on victim satisfaction levels. Unlike traditional criminal justice options that generally focus on punitive measures, this program emphasized the therapeutic options designed to treat the offender. As a result, the majority of victims and defendants believed that the outcome of their case was fair, positive, and respectful.

**Programming Concerns for Victims of Intimate Partner Abuse**

Not only are programs needed to address the needs of victims but it is also important to consider the value of battering prevention programs for men. Over the past three decades, batterer intervention programming has become one of the most popular options when sentencing offenders in cases of intimate partner abuse. Given the high correlation between substance use and intimate partner abuse, most programs also include substance abuse treatment as a part of their curriculum. The majority of these programs offer group therapy, which is popular not only for its cost-effectiveness but also because scholars suggest that the group environment can serve as an opportunity for program participants to support and mentor one another. One criticism of battering intervention programs is that they generally assume that all batterers are alike. This approach does not offer the opportunity for programs to tailor their curriculum to address the differences among men who abuse (Rosenbaum, 2009). In addition, victims of domestic violence voice their dissatisfaction with many of these types of programs, arguing that they are ineffective in dealing with the issues that the men face in their lives (Gillum, 2008).

Intimate partner abuse attacks every community, age, religion, race, class, and sexual identity. Programs that provide services for victims of battering must acknowledge the need for programming that is culturally diverse and
reflect the unique issues within different racial and ethnic communities. The need for culturally relevant programming also extends to shelter programs for victims of domestic violence. In one program, participants noted the absence of women of color (particularly Black women) within the shelter administration and staff, even though the majority of the clientele was Black. Feeling culturally connected to program practitioners (as women of color and IPV survivors themselves) helped survivors understand what they were going through. As one woman notes, “Black women understand other Black women. Ain’t no way a White woman understands what a Black woman going through. . . . Because . . . we’re different, we are totally different” (Gillum, 2009, p. 67). In addition, programs to be based within the targeted community ensure participation from the community residents—if programs are difficult to access geographically, women are less likely to seek out services as a result of time, money (loss of work hours and cost of child care), and transportation limitations. Programs also need to be proactive and engage in prevention efforts with young women and men in the community (Bent-Goodley, 2004).

Culturally diverse programs are not enough to combat issues of violence between intimate partners. Rather, intervention efforts need to attack the systems that create social inequalities—racism, sexism, classism, and so on. In addition, the legal system and program providers need to understand how these issues are interrelated and not dominated by a single demographic factor (Sokoloff, 2004). Regardless of their individual effects on a single person, many of these interventions have the potential to fail at the macro level, as long as the social culture of accepting male violence against women remains (Schwartz & DeKeseredy, 2008).

Stalking and Intimate Partner Violence

According to the National Crime Victimization Survey, stalking is defined as “a course of conduct directed at a specific person that would cause a reasonable person to feel fear” (Baum, Catalano, Rand, & Rose, 2009, p. 1). Estimates by the Supplemental Victimization Survey (SVS) indicate that more than 5.9 million adults experience behaviors defined as stalking or harassment. Table 4.2 illustrates the types and prevalence of stalking behaviors. In most cases, the acts that constitute stalking, such as sending letters or gifts, making phone calls, and showing up to visit, are not inherently criminal. These acts appear harmless to the ordinary citizen but can inspire significant fear and terror in victims of stalking.

Much of what the general public understands about stalking comes from Hollywood, where celebrities have long experienced acts of stalking. Consider the actions of John Hinckley Jr. who became infatuated with Jodie Foster when she first appeared as a child prostitute in the film Taxi Driver. Hinckley’s obsession with Foster continued while she was a student at Yale, but he failed to gain her attention after numerous letters and phone calls. In 1981, Hinckley attempted to assassinate President Ronald Reagan in an effort to impress Foster. He was found not guilty by reason of insanity for his crimes and was committed to St. Elizabeth’s Hospital for treatment. Another example of celebrity stalking is Madonna’s stalker Robert Dewey Hoskins. He was convicted in 1996 for making threats against the star—he told the star that he wanted to “slice her throat from ear to ear” (“After Court Order,” 1996, para. 6) and attempted to break into her house on two separate occasions. During one event, he successfully scaled the security wall of her home and was shot by one of her bodyguards. Other Hollywood victims of stalking include David Letterman, Sandra Bullock, Tyra Banks, and Lindsay Lohan, to name a few. Indeed, it seems that a number of Hollywood personalities have been stalked by an obsessed fan at some point during their careers. While noteworthy

---

3The Supplemental Victimization Survey (SVS) includes only data on respondents aged 18 and older who participated in the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS) during January–June 2006. The data assess victimization incidents that occurred during the 12 months prior to the interview.

4According to these data, 3.4 million people are victims of stalking each year.

5Harassment is defined by the SVS as acts that are indicative of stalking behaviors but do not incite feelings of fear in the victim.
events of Hollywood stalkers brought significant attention to the crime of stalking, the attention was done in ways that reduced the social understanding of this crime to one that was limited to celebrities and the Hollywood circuit. Many of these cases involved perpetrators who suffered from mental disease or defect. This narrow definition had significant effects on the legitimization of this crime for ordinary victims of stalking.

Outside of the Hollywood context, a victim's relationship with her future stalker began in a very ordinary sense. Victories described these men as attentive, charming, and charismatic. But these endearing qualities soon disappeared, and their interactions became controlling, threatening, and violent. Many women blamed themselves for not recognizing the true colors of their stalker earlier. This pattern of self-blaming affected their ability to trust their own judgment and led these women to be hesitant about their decision-making abilities in future relationships as a result of their victimization.

As with many crimes, victims of stalking often do not report their victimization to police. According to SVS data, more than half of the individuals who were victims of stalking did not report their victimization. For many victims, their decision to not report these crimes stemmed from a fear of intensifying or escalating the stalking behaviors. Others dealt with their victimization in their own way, believing that their experience was a private and personal matter. Additionally, many believed that stalking was not a serious enough offense (or did not believe that a crime had occurred) to warrant intervention from the criminal justice system. Finally, some victims felt that nothing could be done to stop the behavior by their stalkers. For those individuals who did report their crimes, SVS data indicate that charges were filed in only 21% of these cases, further solidifying a belief for many victims that the criminal justice system was unable to effectively punish their stalkers in a court of law.

Victims engage in several different strategies in an effort to cope with their stalking victimization. Some victims attempted to solve the trauma through self-reflection and sought out therapeutic resources. Women also made significant changes to their behavior patterns. They might avoid community events out of a fear that their stalker would show up at the same function. Other women moved out of the area yet still expressed fear that their stalker would find them. Some victims tried to renegotiate the definitions of their relationship with their offender through bargaining, deception, or deterrence. Finally, some victims moved against their attackers by issuing warnings or pursuing a legal case against them (Cox & Speziale, 2009; Spitzberg & Cupach, 2003).

### Table 4.3 • Prevalence of Stalking

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Experienced at least one unwanted contact per week</td>
<td>46.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victims were stalked for 5 years or more</td>
<td>11.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experienced forms of cyberstalking</td>
<td>26.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Received unwanted phone calls or messages</td>
<td>66.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Received unwanted letters and e-mail</td>
<td>30.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Had rumors spread about them</td>
<td>35.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Were followed or spied on</td>
<td>34.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experienced fear of bodily harm</td>
<td>30.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Believed that the behavior would never stop</td>
<td>29.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Victims and Offenders of Stalking

Who are the victims of stalking? They are men and women, young and old, of every race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status. Data indicate that there are certain groups that make up the majority of victims of stalking. A meta-analysis of 22 studies on stalking found that female victims made up 74.59% of stalking victims, while 82.15% of the perpetrators were male. In the majority of cases, the perpetrator was someone known to the victim, with 30.3% of all cases occurring as a result of a current or former intimate relationship. Only 9.7% of stalking cases involved someone who was a stranger to the victim (Spitzberg & Cupach, 2003).

While stalking is a crime in its own right, it is also a common experience for victims of intimate partner abuse. The degree to which victims are stalked is directly related to the levels of physical, emotional, and sexual abuse that they experienced with their intimate partner: The greater the abuse in the relationship, the higher the levels of
Stalking can be. Several factors appear to influence whether a victim of domestic violence will be stalked. Women who are no longer in a relationship with their abuser are more likely to experience stalking compared to women currently involved in an IPA relationship. Additionally, domestic violence abusers who are more controlling and physically violent toward their victims are more likely to stalk them. Finally, abusers who use drugs and alcohol are more likely to stalk their partners. For those women who had moved on to new relationships, almost three fourths of them indicated that their new partner was harassed, threatened, or injured by their stalker (Melton, 2007).

Economics also impact the stalking experience for victims. Many victims find that they do not have the economic resources or abilities to move out of their communities to escape their stalker. Many of these women received governmental subsidies for housing—moving would mean giving up this assistance. This lack of mobility made it easier for their perpetrators to continue to stalk and harass their victims. In addition, the close-knit nature of many of these communities led to cases where a batterer’s friends and family members were able to help the offender harass and intimidate their victim. Unfortunately, these cases of third-party stalking are not always recognized by the criminal justice system, or are not connected to the behaviors of the individual. As a result, many victims believe that an escape from the violence is impossible (Tamborra, 2012).

The experience of stalking has a significant effect on a woman’s mental health. Women who experience significant levels of stalking over time are more likely to be at risk for depression and posttraumatic stress disorder. These rates of depression and posttraumatic stress disorder are significantly higher for women who blame themselves for the behaviors of their perpetrator (Kraaij, Arensman, Garnefski, & Kremers, 2007). Victims indicate feelings of powerlessness, depression, sleep disturbances, and high levels of anxiety (Pathe & Mullen, 1997). They are also likely to develop a chronic disease or other injury in response to the high levels of stress that victims of stalking experience (Davis, Coker, & Sanderson, 2002). It is clear that mental health services need to acknowledge how the experience of stalking affects the mental health status of victims and determine how to better provide services to this community.

### Cyberstalking

The use of technology has changed the way in which many victims experience stalking. The use of devices such as e-mail, cell phones, and global-positioning systems (GPS) by offenders to track and monitor the lives of victims has had a significant effect on the experience of stalking. The term cyberstalking was created to address the use of technology as a tool in stalking. Of the 3.2 million identified victims of stalking identified by the SVS, one out of four individuals reported experiencing acts that are consistent with the definition of cyberstalking. Table 4.3 highlights examples of stalking aided by technology. As the use of technology continues to expand in our social world, so will its use to stalk, harass, and engage in acts of violence against individuals.

Like traditional methods of stalking, cyberstalking involves incidents that create fear in the lives of its victims. Just because cyberstalking does not involve physical contact does not mean that it is less damaging or harmful than physical stalking. Indeed, some might argue that the anonymity under which cyberstalkers can operate creates...
significant opportunities for offenders to control, dominate, and manipulate their victims, even from a distance, because there are no geographical limits for stalking within the domain of cyberspace. Indeed, someone can be stalked from just about anywhere in the world. For many victims of “traditional” stalking, cyberstalking presents a new avenue through which victims can be harassed, threatened, and intimidated. In cases of intimate partner abuse, technology and cyberstalking is a way in which abusers can continue to control and harass their victims from afar. “Some perpetrators text and phone repeatedly, creating dread and fear in the victim that the harassment will never end. Some women receive only one text or call daily or weekly, but this can be equally as terrifying in the context of their specific domestic-abuse history” (Woodlock, 2017, p. 586).

While cyberstalking is a relatively new phenomenon, research indicates that the prevalence of these behaviors is expanding at an astronomical rate. Youth and young adults appear to be particularly at risk for these forms of victimization, given their connections to the electronic world through the use of the Internet, blogs, text messaging, and social networking sites, such as Facebook. Consider that the simple act of tagging a friend in a photo on Facebook, Instagram, or other social media platform can provide valuable information to a stalker as it could inadvertently disclose their location (Dimond, Fiesler, & Bruckman, 2011). In addition, participation in activities such as sexting can increase the likelihood that one will be victimized online. Research indicates that 38% of study participants had either sent or received sexually explicit texts or photos. Participation in these activities increases the likelihood of cybervictimization (Reyns, Burek, Henson, & Fisher, 2013). In addition, stalkers can use information to publicly post information that is not only embarrassing but could jeopardize their relationships with friends, family, and employers (Woodlock, 2017). Given the limited understanding of these crimes by victims (and the larger society), it is important that advocates and justice professionals have an understanding about the realities of these crimes in order to provide adequate support for victims.

### Table 4.4 • Experiences of Stalking via Mobile Technologies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Used text messages, phone, and so on to call her names, harass her, or “put her down”</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Used mobile technology to check her location</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Made her feel afraid to not respond to a phone call or text because of what the caller might do (e.g., threaten suicide)</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Checked her text messages without her permission</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Threatened her via text, e-mail, and/or social media</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shared private photographs or videos of her without her permission</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Posted negative information about her on social media</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tracked her via GPS (e.g., using applications such as Find My Friends)</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demanded her electronic password/s</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impersonated her in e-mails, text messages, and or/social media</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purchased a phone for her for the purpose of keeping track of her</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** Woodlock (2017).
For the majority of the 20th century, stalking was not considered to be a crime. The first law criminalizing the act of stalking was created in 1990 by the state of California following the murder of actress Rebecca Schaeffer in 1989 by an obsessed fan. Schaeffer had risen to fame as an actress in the popular television show *My Sister Sam*. Robert Bardo had become obsessed with “Patti,” the character played by Schaeffer on the show, and made several attempts to contact her on the set. He sent Schaeffer several letters and had built a shrine to her in his bedroom. Undeterred, he traveled cross-country, and he paid a private investigator $250 to obtain her home address. On making contact with Schaeffer at her residence, he shot her in the chest, killing her. Bardo was convicted of murder and sentenced to life in prison. Since the death of Rebecca Schaeffer and the creation of the first antistalking law in California, all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and the federal government have created criminal laws against stalking. In addition, the majority of state laws on stalking include details on stalking via electronic methods.

To prosecute someone for stalking, many state laws require victims to indicate that they experienced fear as a result of the offender’s actions. Research indicates that women are more likely to experience fear as a result of being stalked compared to men (Davis et al., 2002). Using data from the National Violence Against Women Survey, Dietz and Martin (2007) found that nearly three fourths of women who were identified as victims of stalking behaviors indicated that they experienced fear as a result of the pursuit by their stalker. The levels of fear depended on the identity of the stalker (women indicated higher levels of fear when they were stalked by a current or former intimate or acquaintance) and how they stalked their victims (physical and communication stalking experiences generated higher levels of fear). Fear levels are also predicted by the severity and frequency of the contact (Reyns & Englebrecht, 2012). But what about women who experienced behaviors consistent with the definition of stalking but who did not feel fearful as a result of these interactions? Are these women not victims of stalking? In many states, they would not be considered victims, and the behaviors perpetrated against them would not be considered a crime.

The challenge with stalking is that many do not perceive stalking to be a significant event. Much of the research in this area is based on hypothetical scenarios, investigating what victims might do in these sorts of situations. From this research, we learn that the perceptions about stalking vary based on the gender of the victim and the offender and the type of relationship as well as the gender of the study participant. In addition, men are more likely to view stalking as a minor event and to engage in victim blaming toward stalking victims (Lambert, Smith, & Geistman, 2013). Victim blaming can be predicated by the type of relationship between the victim and the offender. Victims are the least blameworthy if the offender is a stranger but are considered culpable if the stalking results from a casual sexual relationship, such as a one-night stand. This can in turn impact perceptions of victim reporting—“When the victim reports this to the police, she will have to tell them everything, including how she had sex with him on the first night. This makes her look bad and she might be blamed for leading him on” (Cass & Mallicoat, 2014). If people do not perceive that victims will report these crimes to the police in hypothetical scenarios, we can assume that it is unlikely that they will reach out to the police should they face a similar victimization in their own lives.

**Conclusion**

Many victims of intimate partner violence and stalking did not report their victimization because they did not believe that what was happening to them was a criminal act, particularly in cases where there was no experience of physical violence. One victim noted that in assessing whether a relationship is healthy, women should look at themselves and any changes in their personal behaviors rather than obsessing on the actions of their stalker. “Think about how you were before this happened and how happy you were, and I think once ladies reminisce on that, I think that’s where strength comes from” (Cox & Speziale, 2009, p. 12). Others advised that women should not stay silent on the
issues of intimate partner abuse and stalking in order to protect their own safety, whether that meant filing a police report and obtaining a restraining order or letting friends, family, and coworkers know of their victimization. Here, victims acknowledge an increased need for community awareness about the nature of these victimizations and the resources available to them.

### SUMMARY

- Intimate partner abuse is difficult to identify, because much of the abuse occurs behind closed doors and victims are reluctant to report cases of abuse.
- The Violence Against Women Act of 1994 provided funding for battered women shelters, outreach education, and training on domestic violence for police and court personnel.
- Children who are exposed to violence in the home are at risk for negative mental health outcomes and may continue the cycle of violence as adults.
- Gender-role stereotypes and homophobic views have a significant effect on identifying victims of same-sex IPA and giving them the assistance they need.
- Immigrant victims of domestic violence face a variety of unique issues such as cultural norms regarding violence, gender-role expectations, and a fear of deportation that affect their experience with battering.
- Walker’s cycle of violence (1979) helps explain how perpetrators maintain control within a battering relationship.
- Women are confronted with a variety of barriers in their attempts to leave a relationship where intimate partner abuse is present.
- For many women, mandatory arrest policies have resulted in only a temporary decrease in the violence in their lives, with the potential of increased violence in the future.
- Stalking is defined as a “course of conduct directed at a specific person that would cause a reasonable person to feel fear.”
- Cyberstalking involves the use of technology to track and monitor the lives of victims of stalking.
- Many victims do not report their experiences of being stalked to law enforcement, because they fear that a report will escalate the behavior, or they do not believe that stalking is a serious matter or that anything can be done to stop the stalking behavior.
- Stalking is often related to incidents of intimate partner abuse.

### KEY TERMS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Battered women’s movement</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cyberstalking</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cycle of violence</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dating violence</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discretionary arrest</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic abuse</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional abuse</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harassment</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intimate partner abuse</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mandatory arrest</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minneapolis Domestic Violence Experiment</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No-drop policies</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restraining order</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Same-sex intimate partner abuse</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stalking</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Violence Against Women Act</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How have mandatory arrest and no-drop policies improved the lives of women involved in cases of intimate partner abuse? How have these policies negatively affected victims?

2. What unique issues do immigrant victims of intimate partner abuse face?

3. Describe the different forms of violence that can occur within an intimate partner abusive relationship.

4. Explain how the cycle of violence attempts to explain incidents of intimate partner battering.

5. What barriers exist for women in their attempts to leave a battering relationship?

6. How has the use of technology changed the way in which victims experience stalking? What challenges do these changes present for law enforcement and the criminal justice system in pursuing cases of cyberstalking?

7. How do victims cope with the experience of being stalked?

WEB RESOURCES

Bureau of Justice Statistics: http://bjs.ojp.usdoj.gov

The National Center for Victims of Crime: http://www.ncvc.org

National Coalition Against Domestic Violence: http://www.ncadv.org

The National Domestic Violence Hotline: http://www.ndvh.org/

Office of Victims of Crime: http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/

Office on Violence Against Women: http://www.oww.usdoj.gov/

Stalking Resource Center: http://www.ncvc.org/src/Main.aspx

Stalking Victims Sanctuary: http://www.stalkingvictims.com

Visit www.sagepub.com/mallicoat3e to access additional study tools, including eFlashcards, web quizzes, web resources, video resources, and SAGE journal articles.