Cross-Cultural Issues in Domestic Violence

Responding officers must consider the underlying social context of these women’s lives, including racism, homophobia, and low economic status. This social context not only shapes the experience of domestic violence, but also the survivors’ and justice system’s responses.

Key Findings

Researchers learned that victims of domestic violence in these communities face a complex set of challenges. They may face acculturation problems and racial, sexual, and economic oppression in their new social setting, after already experiencing major social upheavals and political oppression. These issues increase the difficulty they experience in obtaining assistance and may exacerbate the view that what help is available is culturally and linguistically inappropriate.

In fact, services provided by the criminal justice system received mixed ratings from the study participants. Simply put, when police officers responded with sensitivity, the women reported positive experiences. However, when the police response was perceived as insensitive, the women viewed the experience as negative.

Implications for Criminal Justice

The authors suggest that innovative solutions are needed to resolve the unique problems of minority victims of domestic violence in overcoming barriers to the justice system. Responding officers must consider the underlying social context of these women’s lives, including...
racism, homophobia, and low economic status. This social context not only shapes the experience of domestic violence, but also the survivors’ and justice system’s responses.

The report makes several recommendations based on participants’ suggestions and on the authors’ interpretation of the data. The recommendations address three areas—systems, services, and community. The authors call for providing more low-income housing and childcare services for victims and for conducting culturally and linguistically appropriate domestic violence education campaigns in the community.

The authors recommend more outreach on domestic violence by the police to ethnic and sexual minority communities and multiple options for services to survivors of domestic violence. Also recommended are giving greater attention to the special needs of children who have experienced the pain and horror of domestic violence and explaining the variety of victim assistance services that are available at no cost.

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