
INTRODUCTION

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“**DOMESTIC VIOLENCE** affects people from all ages, races and ethnicities, socioeconomic classes, religions, places of origin, and sexual orientations.” You have probably heard this statement or something similar countless times. It has been repeated for the past 30 years at untold public education presentations and continuing education trainings. It appears in every magazine article, on every educational video, and in all brochures and pamphlets about domestic violence. This simple statement acknowledges, of course, that there is diversity in our world, but its larger purpose is to help people understand that violence does not just happen to other women; it happens to people who look just like them. In fact, we can count among its victims our mothers, sisters, and daughters, our neighbors and cousins, even ourselves. And if it can happen to us—and to our mothers, sisters, daughters, neighbors, and cousins—and if we claim to care about the women in our lives, then we care about all battered women.

The notion of “the universal woman” was adopted to help develop public empathy for women who are often blamed for the violence—for staying and for leaving (Collins 1998). This strategy, however, has evolved, whether consciously or unconsciously, into an inadvertent barrier to addressing how a woman’s culture of origin, her place in the physical, political, and social world, and the society’s dominant culture come together to influence how women experience violence and the particular options available to them as a result of that violence. It is now time to move beyond this unintended barrier and to provide the field of domestic violence, social work practitioners, and others who work with survivors of violence and abuse with the necessary tools to help all women, not just those who “look like them.”

Intimate partner violence against women is often experienced within the context of multiple, complex, and competing life issues that confront families grappling with the perils of domestic violence. One such important life issue is the impact of cultural values, beliefs, rituals, mores, and practices on the prevalence of domestic violence. Recognizing that domestic violence affects women of all ages, races, ethnicities, socioeconomic classes, geographical locations, residence statuses, religions, places of origin, and sexual orientations, it is imperative that social work curricula and education as well as training materials reflect the complex and diverse nature of this major problem frequently addressed by social work practitioners in all fields of practice.

This book provides social work educators and their students with a resource that uses the issue of domestic violence to meet the Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards (EPAS) of the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) to design curricula that integrate (1) social and economic justice content grounded in an understanding of distributive justice, human and civil rights, and the global interconnection of oppression; and (2) content relating to the implementation of strategies to combat discrimination, oppression, and economic deprivations and advocate for greater social and economic justice (CSWE 2008). EPAS sets forth the purposes of social work education for preparing competent and effective professionals, developing social work knowledge, and providing leadership in developing service delivery systems that alleviate oppression and other forms of social and economic injustice, all relating to the experiences of women and their children in violent domestic living situations. Because domestic violence cuts across all fields of practice, social work students at all levels will find this material relevant to their future practices.

In addition to meeting requirements set forth in EPAS, this book will help faculty and students address the social justice values of the profession as identified through the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) Code of Ethics. The intersecting multiple layers of race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability, and citizenship status add to the vulnerability experienced by battered women. Thus successful culturally competent generalist social work practice that champions the cause of violence against women in intimate partner relationships requires approaches that are both flexible and respectful of the intersecting multi-categorical identities of women survivors of intimate partner violence.

This volume is the first book to focus on helping strategies and practice approaches with diverse populations—inclusive of race and ethnicity, age, place,

citizenship status including immigrants, refugees, and members of our armed forces, sexual orientation, (dis)abilities, and religious tradition—as it relates to survivors of domestic violence. It represents an important developmental milestone for the field of domestic violence, the profession of social work, and other professionals that work with survivors of domestic violence. The book is a celebration of our shared commitment to culturally competent practice.

The information in this book is not just for advocates working in the domestic violence or crime victim assistance fields; it will assist professional social work practitioners in many different practice fields as well as provide the domestic violence field with a practical tool covering diverse populations affected by domestic violence. It is our hope that the book will be a unifying tool that brings together two groups committed to ending oppression: advocates for battered women and social work practitioners, many of whom are one and the same.

Practitioners, advocates, researchers, and others who work with survivors daily have long recognized that “one size does not fit all.” We cannot expect the same interventions and approaches to be effective with women from different cultural backgrounds. Each domestic violence survivor brings a mix of cultural influences reflecting their own culture of origin, current status in the physical and political world, as well as the influence of the dominant social, economic, and political cultures. We know there is no such entity as the “universal victim” just as there is no “perfect client.” Despite this recognition, however, information about violence against women from diverse cultural backgrounds is often difficult to find or scattered across a few specialized journals or books. With the expansion of research on specific populations, the tasks of collecting, analyzing, and disseminating this new knowledge has become ever more challenging—both from the perspective of enough hours in the day and access to scholarly journals and books. Each of the contributors to this book has collected information about a specific population, summarized important points, and applied the research to working with individuals. They have accomplished what many of us do not have the time to do. They have performed a service that will be appreciated by survivors and those who work in this field, including advocates, nurses, and criminal justice personnel.

Because of the prevalence of domestic violence and the presence of professional social workers in health, education, criminal justice, and social service settings, most social work practitioners encounter clients who have current or past involvement with violence perpetrated against them by an intimate partner (see Figure int.1). In recognition of the cross-cutting nature of the issue,



FIGURE INT.1. Domestic violence: a cross-cutting issue for social workers. Developed by Fran S. Danis, PhD.

we use a generalist practice approach that can be applied by social workers and other professionals in many different practice settings.

Embedded in the diversity content of this volume is a strong appreciation of a strengths perspective and empowerment practice. The strengths perspective can be used only if workers know the distinctive cultural packages from which their clients evolved. Armed with this knowledge, valid assessment and intervention can occur. A cornerstone of practice in both professional social work and the domestic violence field is the concept of empowerment practice (Gutierrez 1989). Within the domestic violence field, empowerment practice is addressed first as a strategy for assisting individual women to take control of their lives and, second, as a strategy for taking action against domestic violence in specific communities.

ADVOCATE AND RESEARCHER TEAMS

Most of the chapters were developed by teams of writers that included people working directly with individual survivors from specific populations as well as people conducting research about the needs of survivors from those populations. Many of the contributors are well-known experts in the domestic violence field. Researchers contribute their expertise in developing and conducting research as well as in analyzing and interpreting others' research. They usually have access to published literature in the field and have a commitment to disseminating information to practitioners through teaching and writing. Practitioners contribute practical knowledge about the diverse communities with which they work. They help researchers make sense of findings and identify ways new information can be applied in the field. We believe that these advocate–researcher teams have provided a comprehensive picture of various cultures and political statuses through working with individuals from a specific population. Although we encountered a number of areas where there were gaps on either side of the equation (a researcher or an advocate with social work backgrounds), many teams sought additional assistance from experts in their respective areas and had a strong commitment to the overall purpose of this book—aiding the provision of culturally competent services to survivors of domestic violence and abuse.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

Like most reference books there is no particular order in which we invite you to read the chapters of this book. We suspect that the book will be used very much like a dictionary or encyclopedia. Readers will select chapters of interest at their leisure or when they have a compelling need to do so. This interest may be sparked by having clients from specific groups or to check the facts regarding the populations to which you personally relate. Rather than attempting to organize the chapters into artificial themes, we simply ordered the chapters alphabetically, similar to any other reference book.

Although reading about each population separately may not seem congruent with an intersectionality approach, we believe that without a thorough understanding of each population, one cannot apply culturally competent practice within an intersectionality framework. For example, one cannot help

an African American woman with disabilities, who lives in a small rural town, address violence from her same-sex partner without understanding the needs of African Americans, lesbians, persons with disabilities, and rural environments. The information in each of these chapters must be known and applied to the particular situation. We also recognize that by having specific chapters about specific populations there is a danger that we are creating new stereotypes and a practice cookbook. It is critical that our readers, the practice community, students, advocates, and others recognize that each client is an individual who may share many experiences in common with the groups to which he or she “belongs” but who may also have many differences. Recognition of these within-group differences is essential to culturally competent practice. That is why this book can only introduce readers to particular populations. For example, the terms “Asian and Pacific Islanders” or “Latinas” represent individuals from many different countries and cultures. It would be a mistake to think that an indigenous woman from the Hawaiian Islands would share the same cultural experiences and expectations as a woman from Taiwan. There is no way to anticipate the myriad of combinations that are potentially possible given all the diversity “factors.” We wanted to be as inclusive as possible and, in doing so, made a conscious decision to sacrifice depth. We hope that by reading each individual chapter your interest is so sparked as to seek out additional sources of information about a particular population. Better yet, remember that your client is the best source of information about her life and how she perceives the cultural influences that shape her world.

Although readers may pick and choose, we suggest that you read the first two chapters to provide a context for the rest of the book. The first chapter, “Cultural Competence and Intersectionality: Emerging Frameworks and Practical Approaches,” provides an overview of the mandates for the social work profession to engage in culturally competent practice, applies the elements of culturally competent practice to the field of domestic violence, and demonstrates our shared commitment to addressing social and economic oppression within a framework of intersectionality. We had many discussions about how best to reflect the concept of intersectionality, that is, moving away from a “one-size-fits-all” paradigm to a paradigm that sees women as uniquely whole with multilayered identities stemming from their race, color, age, social class, ethnicity, culture, history, geographical location, language, and citizenship status. The message of this chapter is that if we are to be effective and culturally competent in working with survivors of intimate partner violence, we must develop, adopt, and apply models and practice approaches that take

into consideration the intersectionality of our multilayered identities that provide the context for one's lived experiences.

Chapter 2, "Understanding Domestic Violence: A Primer," reviews domestic violence terminology, risk and protective factors, and reasons "why women stay," and includes a discussion of the strengths of battered women. Practice issues associated with universal screening, risk assessment, and safety planning are explored as well as criminal justice interventions and contraindicated interventions.

The 12 additional chapters address specific populations: African Americans, Asian and Pacific Islanders, persons with disabilities; immigrants and refugees; women in later life; Latinas; lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered persons; members of the military; Native Americans; women of different religions; rural women; and teens. Each chapter provides readers with a review of the current literature and a case study demonstrating how to apply knowledge about that particular population in a culturally competent manner. The literature review includes a general overview and demographic information, salient historical issues, and a description of cultural issues within an ecological framework. A discussion of domestic violence in that population, community reactions and resources available, barriers to using traditional domestic abuse services, differential application of policy responses, and ethical dilemmas and concerns are reviewed.

The case study for each chapter illustrates the interplay between cultural/diversity issues and domestic violence, provides suggestions for developing a respectful collaborative working relationship between worker and client aimed at defining the issues from the victim's perspective, and demonstrates the application of generalist practice to culturally specific and sensitive intervention strategies. The case study also shows how to use interviewing skills for assessment and identification of individual strengths, selecting and implementing culturally appropriate interventions at appropriate system levels—including individual, organizational, and community levels—for both practice and policy advocacy. Each chapter ends with a resource list of national organizations that can be accessed for more information and assistance with a particular population.

We sincerely hope that *Domestic Violence: Intersectionality and Culturally Competent Practice* is a practical and accessible tool providing critical information and demonstrating the application of culturally competent practice skills for advocates in the field of domestic violence, as well as for social work practitioners everywhere who encounter women, children, and men

who survive violence at the hands of an intimate partner. We invite our readers to join with us, the editors, and all the individuals who contributed to this volume, on this passionate quest for delivering, with sensitivity and compassion, the highest-quality services to our clients.

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