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Victimization and Attitudes Towards Woman Abuse of Impoverished Minority Women[1]

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ABSTRACT

There has been virtually no research on the linkages between poor minority women's attitudes toward woman abuse and their experiences of mistreatment. In this article, this relationship is explored for 144 women from three racial groups living in public housing in a Minnesota city. One unique aspect of the study is the inclusion of Hmong women, members of a group originally from several areas of Southeast Asia, and about whom little is known. Generally, while there were no differences between groups, and a few within the Black or White groups, Hmong women who agreed with male privilege were five times more likely to be abused than other Hmong women, while Hmong women who disagreed with statements approving of male aggression in certain specific situations were only one third as likely to be abused. The results suggest that while rates of abuse among minority poor women are profound, agreement with certain patriarchal norms that may validate abuse varies considerably, and may have different consequences for different ethnic groups. Further research examining potential reasons for these variations is needed if policy makers and practitioners are to adequately address these women's experiences of abuse.

Keywords: Hmong women; psychological/physical abuse; attitudes; minority women.

The linkages between poor minority women's attitudes toward woman abuse and their experiences of mistreatment have not been the subject of much systematic empirical research (Rasche 2001). Here we explore this relationship for a group of women living in public housing in a Minnesota city.

A unique aspect of this study is the emphasis on Hmong women, members of a group originally from several areas of Southeast Asia. Anecdotal evidence suggests that Hmong women experience high levels of victimization by their male partners. This study reports the results of an actual study of victimization: although scholars have investigated the relationship between women's definitions of abuse and how this is related to their views on patriarchy, these findings have not been grounded in any actual study of the victimization of Asian women (Ahmad et. al. 2004). Thus, one goal of the paper is to report on the incidence of psychological, economic, and physical victimization of Hmong women and to compare whether it is different than that suffered by Black and White women in a sample of public housing residents. A second goal is to examine Hmong women's attitudes towards woman abuse, and whether it is related to the physical and non-physical victimization of women in that group.

One reason for studying the Hmong is that while woman abuse cuts across ethnic and class lines, some scholars have argued that both the rates and contours of victimization may vary according to ethnic group. For instance, researchers have found higher rates of violence for both Latina and African-American women than for White women (Hien and Bukszpan 1999; Campbell et. al. 2002). More relevant to this paper, preliminary research suggests that attitudes towards intimate woman abuse vary according to cultural experiences (Gabler, Stern, and Miserandino 1998). Although we know of no empirical data on the victimization of Hmong women, there has been some study of Asian women generally. Scholars have claimed that there are culturally specific values that can isolate Asian women, including reducing

their use of the formal justice system. These values make them particularly vulnerable to physical and sexual assault (Abraham 1999; 2000; Bui and Morash 1999; Bui, 2001; Huisman 2001). In fact, Morash, Bui and Santiago (2000), although they were referring to Mexican-Americans, argue that in a culture of male supremacy, even achieving economic independence for women will not reduce woman abuse. Cultural values promoting woman abuse remain salient in groups that come closer to achieving economic equality.

Which groups are more at risk for woman abuse? Abraham (1998) points out that most South Asian countries, at all socio-economic levels, in all religions, subscribe not only to an ideology of male supremacy, but more specifically to the notion that women are male property. This patriarchal ideology in very traditional Asian cultures pressures many abused women to suffer in silence, to accept their fate, and to obey the men society claims are their superiors (Lee 2002; and see Raj and Silverman, 2002, for a review of cultural risk factors). Battered Hmong women, anecdotal evidence suggests, may face stresses that might be less commonly faced by battered American women, or if the same stresses are faced they may be worse for Hmong women. These include war-associated trauma, unfamiliarity with American culture, English language barriers, the consequences of early marriage and large numbers of children, a lack of financial, political and legal resources, low levels of social and community support, and deeply embedded sexism (Jau 1998). In common with some other impoverished immigrants, women who lack English language skills and are completely dependent upon their spouses for their ability to maintain immigrant visa status may be particularly vulnerable (Abraham 2000). Further, as Lee points out, we may know less about Asian women's experiences of violence because reporting means

> exposing weakness to outsiders, shaming the family name, violating the virtues of perseverance and endurance, challenging male supremacy, and bringing disruption to the family…instead of developing a 'survivor mentality'….the woman might instead develop an 'instigator mentality' (e.g., "I am the bad person who brings shame to myself or the family.") (2002: 474).

Foo's (2002: 148 - 150) discussion of Hmong[2] cultural values also implies the potential vulnerability of this population. In Hmong culture, social control is exercised via a strong clan system. Thus, Foo points out that:

> Individuals and their actions are subordinate to family and clan. Thus, individual actions are scrutinized for their potential negative effect on family and clan reputation.

Moreover;

- Hmong culture is highly patriarchal. Women are considered far less valuable than men, and "[A] good temper, work skills, obedience to husband and parents [are] the characteristics most valued in young women." Women typically marry at 15 or 16 years old and polygamy is common. Traditionally, women are expected to have five or six children, thereby placing tremendous financial burdens on many families.
- Divorce in Hmong marriages is frowned upon and brings great shame to the extended families of both parties. When it does occur, it involves a complex process by which the families of both persons must agree to the break up, inter-family ties are undone, and bride prices are repaid.
- Many Hmong men in their 20s and 30s view physical abuse as an acceptable way of "disciplining a disobedient wife." While other Hmong men reject patriarchal traditions, "few have taken concrete steps to address these problems."

METHOD AND MEASURES

The study was conducted between September and October of 2001. The sample, which consisted of women over the age of 18, was recruited via posters announcing a study of women's quality of life (specified as perceptions of health, relationships with other people, work and social experiences) posted within and around two community centers serving two public housing estates.

These community centers provide a wide variety of services, including recreation programs, health and wellness care, child care, educational and employment training classes, counseling services, and a Resident Council. The women were not asked specifically why they were visiting the community centers. Thus, we have no way of knowing for certain if the women in the sample were receiving counseling for domestic violence. We do know, however, that many were visiting the site for a variety of reasons other than health or wellness issues, and the majority were recruited outside leisure activity areas (such as gyms and recreation rooms), or as they left the office of the Women Infants and Children program.

Participants were approached by female research assistants only if there was no male present, and were offered $10 to complete a survey on the quality of women's lives in the neighborhood. To avoid potential problems of misunderstanding due to language barriers, Hmong and Spanish translators were provided, and women were given the option of having the questions read to them in either language. All participants were assured that their participation was voluntary, and that

the data gathered would be kept confidential. To minimize the risk of trauma recall, respondents were told that they could terminate the interview or survey at any time, or skip any questions that made them feel uncomfortable.

Informed consent was obtained in writing from each participant. After completing the survey in a private room supplied to us by the community centers, the women were paid $10 and given a packet of information and resources dealing with various health issues including domestic violence, vaccinations, HIV, childrearing, and birth control. To minimize the chance of re-victimization as a result of a batterer finding out that his partner had participated in the survey, following Colton (2001), we included a range of information in the packet because we assumed there would be risk for some women to have a pamphlet on domestic violence found by a batterer. The entire process yielded a final sample of 144 women.

We also considered the potential problems that might arise in response distributions given that respondents were offered a monetary incentive to complete the survey. Singer and Kulka (2002) point out that financial incentives do increase response rates among low-income and minority respondents, but that bias may be introduced via; 1. The self selection of respondents with particular characteristics (e.g., the extremely poor) and attitudes/experiences who otherwise might not participate in the research [3]. The influence of the incentive itself on people's opinions (e.g., using pens with political messages in a survey on political opinions); and, 3. The potential of the incentive to put respondents in optimistic moods. Given that all the respondents were poor and living in public housing, the fact that the cash payment had nothing to do with the substantive content of the survey, and that this was a survey examining the extent of women's negative experiences in their lives (the bias effect here would be that women would under-report victimization), we are confident that the potential for biased responses in this study was minimal.

The demographic characteristics of the sample are provided in Table 1. Our survey asked respondents to identify if they were Asian-Hmong. Twenty eight percent of the respondents self-identified as Hmong, while 54 percent stated they were African-American and 9.7 percent were white. Other groups were less than 5 percent Hispanic, about 2 percent North American Indian, and 2 percent spread out among other groups such as other Asian women or women of mixed ethnic descent. For simple mathematical reasons, then, many of the comparisons here are between Hmong and African-American women.

Several scales and demographic questions were used to make up the 17-page survey, including items tapping into respondent's victimization by crime, perceptions of neighborhood life, and fear of crime. Here we focus attention on measures of physical, psychological, and economic abuse and on a scale measuring women's attitudes towards woman abuse. The Revised Conflict Tactics Scale (CTS-2) (modified to make answers dichotomous) was used to determine if the women had suffered from physical violence within the past 12 months (Straus et. al. 1996). Physical violence was measured as experiencing any incidence of a range of behaviors, including being grabbed, pushed or shoved, slapped, punched or kicked, choked, or having a knife or gun used on them.

Table 1. Selected Demographic Characteristics of the Sample (n=144).

Variables	Percent
Marital Status	
Single	39.2
Dating someone	17.5
Living with someone	4.2
Married	28.7
Divorced	3.5
Separated	3.5
Widowed	3.5
Respondent has children	
Yes	65
No	35
Racial Self-Identification	
Black	53.5
Asian-Hmong	27.8
White	9.7
Hispanic (non-white)	4.9
North American Indian	2.1
Other	2.1
Level of Education	
Did not go to school	10.6
Some or completed elementary school	2.8
Some or completed high school	55.3
Some or completed college	29.1
Some or completed graduate school	2.1
Respondent's mean age	32 (SD=11.2)

To measure psychological and economic abuse, we created a scale using items from the short version of Tolman's (2001) Psychological Maltreatment of Women scale (PMWI), and items drawn from deliberations at a workshop at the 2001 Trapped by Poverty, Trapped by Abuse conference (University of Michigan School of Social Work, 2001). The resulting scale consisted of 26 items (alpha = .97) measuring dimensions of both economic (e.g., withheld or took money from you, used money to influence you, did not contribute financially) and psychological partner abuse (e.g., yelled and screamed at you, blamed you for his

problems, called you names, tried to make you feel crazy).

To measure the women's attitudes towards woman abuse, the Revised Attitudes Toward Wife Abuse Scale (RAWA) was used, with answers given as dichotomous responses (Yoshioka, DiNoia, and Ullah 2002). This scale consists of three subscales: Situation Specific Approval of Violence (SSA), Male Privilege (MP) and Perceived Lack of Alternatives for Confronting Abuse (PA). All questions were introduced with the following preamble: "We would like to know how you feel about the following statements. For each statement, please indicate whether you agree or disagree." The SSA subscale (alpha = .97) dealt with situations in which a woman may feel a husband has the right to use violence against his wife, the MP subscale (alpha = .90) addressed perceptions of male power and control, and the PA subscale (alpha = .93) tapped into attitudes on what alternatives a woman could use in an abusive situation.

FINDINGS

Experience with Abuse

As shown in Table 2, there are no major differences in the level of victimization among Hmong, African-American and White women (the other groups were too small for comparison). Essentially, it seems that the level of victimization of these women is tremendously high no matter what their group of identification. Overall, roughly two-thirds (64.3%) report psychological or economic abuse in the past 12 months and more than one-third (35.5%) experienced physical violence. Although there are some minor differences (White women reported slightly more psychological and economic abuse, and slightly less physical abuse), these differences are not statistically significant. Thus, our conclusion is that there are no between group differences in the levels of victimization.

Attitudes toward Abuse

However, there was quite a bit of variation in the attitudes towards male abuse of women in intimate relationships, with the most consistent difference being that the Hmong group, when compared to their White and Black counterparts, was more likely to agree with the male privilege and situational approval of violence statements, and disagree with the perceived lack of alternatives for confronting abuse statements (disagree that there are options for battered women to end abuse). Table 3 makes this clear, with the questions that showed a statistically significant difference between the three groups marked with asterisks. However, a simple visual examination of Table 3 suggests that most of the findings come from the very different attitudes of the small group of White women. Repeating these tests on just the Black and Hmong women gives a slightly different result, where only two questions, both endorsements of male privilege, show a difference at the .05 level: "A man is the ruler of his home," and "A husband is entitled to have sex with his wife whenever he wants it." In both cases, the Hmong women agree with this statement at a statistically significant level higher than Black women.

Explaining Abuse

Finally, logistic regression was used to see if a more complex multivariate model could be built to explain the complex forms of abuse that these women had suffered. The dependent variable (GLOBABUS) was created to measure <u>any</u> experience of psychological, economic, or physical abuse (1 = yes, 0 = no) in the past 12 months. While some may question the combination of physical with psychological/abuse on the grounds that they are qualitatively different in terms of seriousness, we contend, with other scholars, that abuse should not be studied as a continuum of severity. Indeed, the consequences of psychological/economic abuse can be as, or more, devastating than a punch or kick (Walker 1979; DeKeseredy and MacLeod 1997; Fitzpatrick and Halliday 1992), and psychological abuse almost always accompanies physical abuse (O'Leary & Maiuro 2001). However, we have provided some information below on how the logistic regression tables work out when physical abuse is separated from non-physical abuse.

Table 2. Experiences Psychological, Economic Abuse or Physical Abuse at Least Once in Past 12 Months by Race.

Correlation Examined		Black	Asian-Hmong	White	Total
Experienced psychological or economic abuse at least once in past 12 months (%)	No	37.7	34.3	28.6	35.7
	Yes	62.3	65.7	71.4	64.3
Chi. Sq.=.469, df=2, Sig.=.791		(n=77)	(n=35)	(n=14)	
Experienced physical violence at least once in past 12 months (%)	No	63.6	64.7	69.2	64.5
	Yes	36.4	35.3	30.8	35.5
Chi. Sq.=.153, df=2, Sig.=.926		(n=77)	(n=34)	(n=13)	

Given that both income and education may have a negative association with abuse (Bachman & Saltzman, 1995), and that age may have a positive association (particularly for older Hmong women who may be less "acculturated" to U.S. norms, or more wedded to traditional ones), these variables were included in the test model. In addition, scores on each of the three dimensions of the RAWA (PA, SSA and MP) were entered, as well as racial background (dummy coded as RACEBLAC and RACEWHIT with Hmong as the reference category). The model was tested in a variety of ways, including forward stepwise selection with the likelihood-ratio test used as the criterion for removal of variables from the model. The differences between methods were slight, and overall the model statistics show that, as a group, the independent variables do not do a good job of predicting scores on the dependent variable. In particular, age, education, race/ethnicity, and income (especially since all of the women were impoverished) did not seem to be valuable variables for predicting which women living in public housing are more likely to suffer psychological, economic, or physical abuse.

In Table 4 we see that both situation specific approval of violence and the endorsement of male privilege are related to the women's experiences of abuse. In fact, looking at the log odds, women who endorse male privilege are more than twice as likely to be abused as other women. Women who disagree with the situation specific statements of when a man can hit a woman are only half as likely to be abused as other women. The final variable on a perceived lack of alternatives to being abused is confusing as it includes questions that are both reverse coded and double negatives, but the proper interpretation is just that it did not reach statistical significance. However, the model shown in Table 4 is statistically significant as a whole.

The analysis in Table 4 was repeated using two different dependent variables. In Table 5 the variable was whether the women had experienced psychological or economic abuse in the past 12 months. In Table 6, the variable was whether the women had experienced physical abuse in the past 12 months. As can be seen, the table statistics in Tables 4, 5, and 6 are very similar in all aspects. This provides some support for our earlier contention that a global abuse variable can be used.

Table 3. Proportion of Respondents Endorsing Items on RAWA by Race.

Percent agreeing with statement:	Black (n=77)	Asian-Hmong (n=40)	White (n=14)
Endorsement of male privilege			
A husband should have the right to discipline his wife*	29.9	45	7.1
A man is the ruler of his home*	32.1	50	14.3
A husband is entitled to have sex with his wife whenever he wants it**	31.2	52.5	0
Some wives seem to ask for beatings from their husbands	24.7	37.5	7.1
Situation-specific approval of violence			
A husband or lover has the right to hit a woman if she had sex with another man*	22.1	37.5	0
A husband or lover has the right to hit a woman if she refuses to cook and keep the house clean*	20.8	35.0	0
A husband or lover has the right to hit a woman if she refuses to have sex with him*	22.1	32.5	0
A husband or lover has the right to hit a woman if she made fun of him at a party	20.8	27.5	0
A husband or lover has the right to hit a women if she told friends that he was sexually pathetic	20.8	27.5	0
A husband or lover has the right to hit a women if she nagged him too much	23.4	27.5	0
Perceived lack of alternatives for confronting abuse			
A wife should move out if the house if her husband hits her	58.4	57.5	78.6
It is never acceptable for a husband or lover to hit his wife or girlfriend	54.5	50.0	85.7
A husband or lover should be arrested if he hits his wife or girlfriend*	61.0	45.0	85.7
Wife beating is grounds for divorce*	61.0	45.0	85.7

*p=.05
**p=.01

Table 4. Logistic Regression (Reduced Model): Any Experience of Psychological, Economic or Physical Abuse in Past 12 Months (Yes/No).

	B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)
PA	-.154	.128	1.448	1	.229	.858
SSA	-.648	.234	7.647	1	.006	.523
MP	.852	.347	6.037	1	.014	2.345
Constant	1.877	.691	7.391	1	.007	6.537

Model Chi Square=14.199, df=3, Sig.=.003
-2 Log Likelihood=164.973, Nagelkerke R^2=.134

Table 5. Logistic Regression: Experienced Psychological & Economic Abuse in Past 12 Months—All Women.

	B	S.E.	Wald	Df	Sig.	Exp(B)
PA	-.234	.126	3.433	1	.064	.791
SSA	-.511	.215	5.653	1	.017	.600
MP	.747	.318	5.501	1	.019	2.111
Constant	1.770	.688	6.607	1	.010	5.869

Model Chi Square=12.548, df=3, Sig.=.006
-2 Log Likelihood=168.160, Nagelkerke R^2=.119

Table 6. Logistic Regression: Experienced Physical Abuse in Past 12 Months—All Women.

	B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)
PA	.041	.127	.104	1	.747	1.042
SSA	-.558	.190	8.656	1	.003	.572
MP	.622	.266	5.464	1	.019	1.862
Constant	-.117	.744	.025	1	.875	.890

Model Chi Square=9.682, df=3, Sig..021
-2 Log Likelihood=165.182, Nagelkerke R^2=.095

What we also discovered earlier was that the between-group differences are not strong. The question was raised whether the RAWA questions would be more useful in a within-group analysis. Restricting the model discussed above to Hmong women only (Table 7) shows a sharper picture of the relationship of belief in male privilege and victimization, at least in that community. The Hmong women who agree with the male privilege statements, looking at the log odds, are five times as likely to be abused as other Hmong women. Those who disagree with the situation specific statements are one-third as likely as other Hmong women to be victimized. The alternatives question does not differentiate between victimized and non-victimized Hmong women. An interesting thing happens when the analysis is divided as above for two different types of abuse. In Table 8, the basic findings of Table 7 are repeated for physical abuse, although perhaps weaker for male privilege and stronger for situation specific statements. The situation is also interesting for psychological and economic abuse. An examination of the data shows that all women who reported physical abuse also reported psychological or economic abuse.

The reverse was not true; some Hmong women reported psychological or economic abuse but said there was no physical abuse. Thus, the raw counts for the global abuse variable and the psychological/economic abuse variable are identical, and the logistic regression table is identical to Table 7.

At the same time, restricting the model to Black women only shows a completely different picture. While all of the variables show the same findings, none of them were statistically significant, and the entire model was not statistically significant. Put simply, the RAWA questions were less valuable in differentiating within the Black community of women who were victimized.

DISCUSSION

One of the most difficult areas to discuss in this study is the direction of cause. Are women victimized because of their beliefs, or do women believe as they do because of abuse? The former is a form of victim blaming, while the latter may not be a new finding, as it has long been a lynchpin of feminist theory (e.g., MacKinnon 1987). Yet, the findings here are much

Table 7. Logistic Regression (reduced Model): Any Experience of Psychological, Economic or Physical Abuse in Past 12 Months (Yes/No)—Hmong Women Only.

	B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)
PA	.099	.304	.107	1	.744	1.104
SSA	-1.256	.539	5.430	1	.020	.285
MP	1.639	.737	4.949	1	.026	5.151
Constant	.641	1.499	.183	1	.669	1.899

Model Chi Square=9.125, df=3, Sig.=.028
-2 Log Likelihood=35.879, Nagelkerke R^2=.317

Table 8. Logistic Regression: Experienced Physical Abuse—Hmong Women Only.

	B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)
PA	.330	.288	1.314	1	.252	1.391
SSA	-1.028	.442	5.403	1	.020	.358
MP	.937	.488	3.689	1	.055	2.552
Constant	-.193	1.752	.012	1	.912	.825

Model Chi Square=7.022, df=3, Sig.=.071
-2 Log Likelihood=37.127, Nagelkerke R^2=.257

more complex than this. To make an argument on these data that a situation of abuse and oppression causes women to adopt attitudes excusing and facilitating such abuse would require that the abused women generally in the sample develop such attitudes, which is clearly not the case. One can argue that Hmong women are a particular case of deep oppression, such that they are affected more than Black or White women, but this would seem to lead to an argument that battered Black or White women are no longer living under situations of severe maltreatment by men, another untenable argument. This would return us to the first argument, which is that if women are not victimized because of their beliefs, that at least having certain beliefs facilitates being battered. In the case of Black or White women, this does not seem to be the case in this sample. Ho (1990) has argued that for Asian women, there is a strong link between violent victimization and traditions of suffering, perseverance, accepting one's fate and men's customary position of authority within the family, as well as resistance to divorce or separation as solutions to abuse. However, what we have found here is that in the case of Hmong women, those who actively maintain attitudes against such a patriarchal ideology and are in favor of empowering women to embrace solutions to abuse, clearly are very substantially less likely to be battered. A suggestion that women who embrace patriarchal ideologies are more likely to be abused can be attacked as being a form of victim blame, but the flip side of such an argument is that there are circumstances where women can avoid victimization through their own beliefs and presumably behaviors based on those beliefs. This seems to agree with the conclusions of Morash and Bui (2000) that making immigrant isolated women more economically independent will not reduce abuse, but rather that the best plan of action is to eliminate culture-specific ideologies of male supremacy. If, as Abraham (1999) and Ho (1990) point out, the norms in Southeast Asian communities make women more vulnerable to woman abuse, the main finding from this study seems to be that those women who adhere less to these traditional norms are less likely to suffer from physical, psychological and economic abuse.

Further, this study adds to a growing body of evidence suggesting that compared to the general population, poor women are at greater risk of experiencing physical and nonphysical violence at the hands of intimate partners (Mahoney, Williams, and West 2001; Thomas 2000; Yoshihama 2000). For example, the National Violence Against Women (NVAW) survey found that 1.5 percent of women in the general population reported being victims of physical abuse in the past 12 months (Tjaden and Thoennes 2000), but the corresponding incidence rate (victimization in the past 12 months) in this study was approximately 16 times higher. Although we have no comparison group in this study of women who were not living in poverty, the data seem to support the contention that women in public housing suffer more interpersonal violence than women in the general population. For example, 19.3 percent of Canadian women in one study reported being victimized by physical violence in the past 12 months (DeKeseredy, Alvi, Schwartz and Perry 1999), and Renzetti and Maier's (2002) study of public housing residents in

Camden, New Jersey found an incidence rate of violent victimization of 33 percent (and also see Websdale 2001, Raphael and Tolman 1997; Browne and Bassuk 1997; Bassuk, Melnick and Browne 1998). Psychological and economic abuse was not measured in the NVAW, but here nearly two-thirds of the women reported being so victimized in the past 12 months.

As perhaps an aside, it is important to note that while no differences between groups were found, overall belief in male privilege was widespread in this sample. Roughly one-third to one-half of all women agreed with each statement on the RAWA survey. In this community, minority women's endorsements of men's patriarchal privilege were strong and tied to victimization by men.

However, one problem is conceiving of poor minority women as being similarly affected by societal forces of patriarchy. Here, perhaps because this is a study of an American public housing location, there were no statistically significant differences between the groups. Yet, *within* one group there was a difference. While the RAWA attitudinal questions on male privilege did not do a good job of differentiating various women in the Black community, it was a powerful differentiator of women in the Hmong community. Hmong women who agreed with male privilege were five times more likely to be abused than other Hmong women, and Hmong women who disagreed with situation specific statements of approval of male violence were less than one third as likely to be abused as other Hmong women. Thus, the results reported here support findings from other studies suggesting that rates of abuse among minority poor women are profound. Our study also suggests, however, that agreement with certain patriarchal norms that may validate abuse varies considerably, and may have different consequences for different ethnic groups.

The most important limitation of this study is that it did not fully measure a range of variables that may help to provide a deeper understanding of what discriminates between the experiences of Hmong women. Given the length and scope of the survey, and in light of time, budget, and opportunity constraints, we could not measure variables like degree of acculturation of the respondents, immigrant status (e.g., length of time in the country), attitudes to abuse prior to immigration, the process of adapting to a new culture and attendant role changes, prior trauma experienced in the home country, or in-depth particulars of the women's personal characteristics. However, the findings of this study make clear that future research of this kind should include such variables, and that such studies might profit by employing qualitative techniques to better understand the contours of these women's experiences and attitudes.

Research is also required to evaluate the attitudes and beliefs of these women's male partners, as well as the potential contribution of male peer support in exacerbating victimization, particularly in strong patriarchal cultures (DeKeseredy and Schwartz 2002). In terms of policy and intervention, research examining the role of factors such as social support and education in mitigating abuse among such populations will also be useful.

ENDNOTES

1. This article is a revised version of a paper presented at the American Society of Criminology annual meetings, Chicago, IL, November, 2002.

2. The Hmong originated in China but emigrated en masse to Vietnam, Laos, Thailand, and Burma in the 19th century. During the 1960s, the Hmong were recruited by the Central Intelligence Agency to help US forces in the war against North Vietnam. When the US left Vietnam, the Hmong were persecuted and threatened with extinction by ruling forces. In 1975, US authorities helped the Hmong to make their way to the US. Today the majority of US Hmong live in California, Minnesota, and Wisconsin.

3. Although the effects of poverty on intimate violence are far from clear (Benson and Fox 2002), the fact that these data derive from a local victimization survey lend credibility to the idea that what we are uncovering is not an artifact of respondent's willingness to report victimization to police or other authorities.

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