

# Intimate Partner Violence in Immigrant & Refugee Communities

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# Immigrants & Refugees in the U.S.

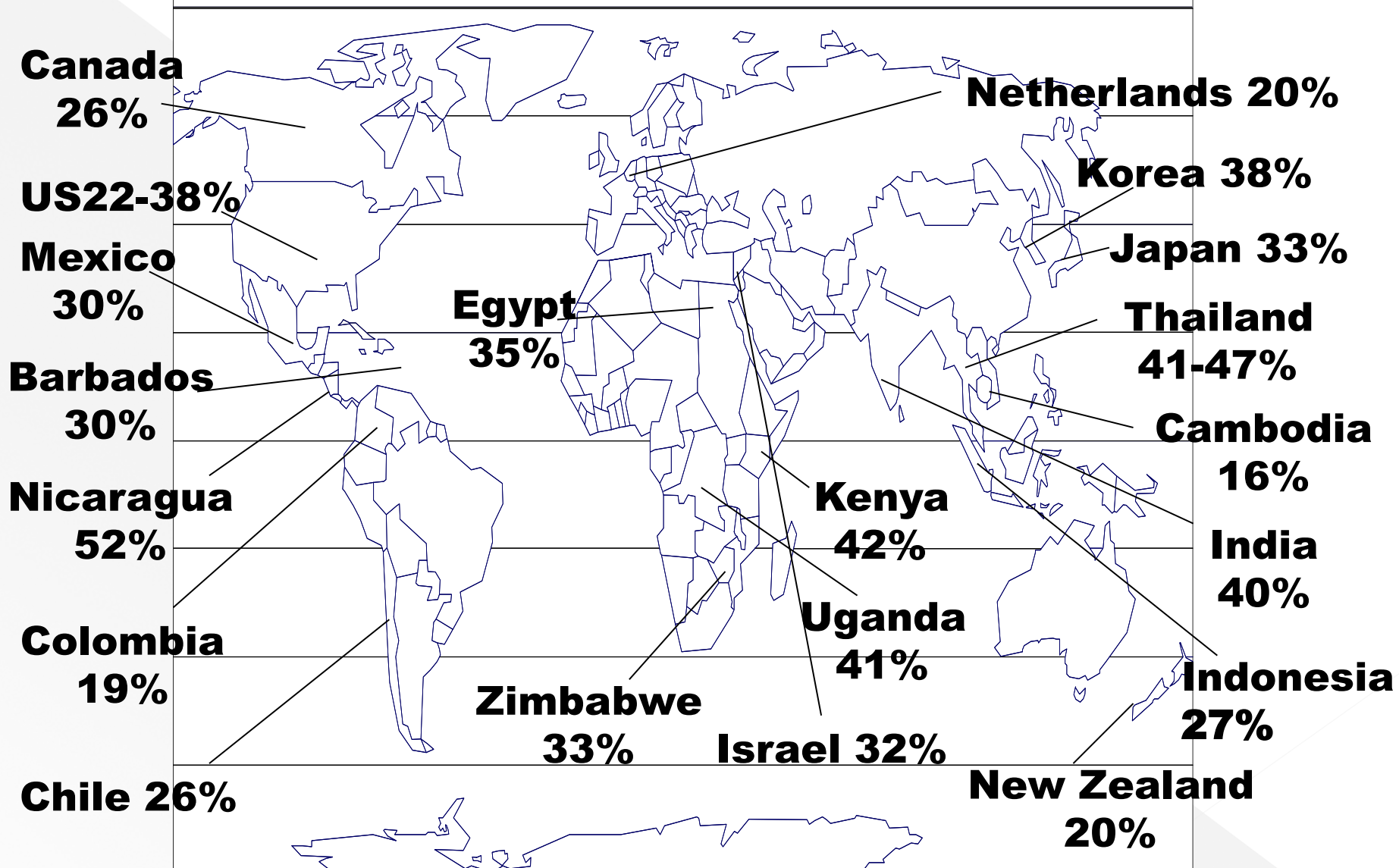
## Immigrants:

- ◉ 12.4% of the U.S. population is foreign-born (2010).
- ◉ The largest from Mexico, China, the Philippines & India (US Census Bureau, 2003<sup>4</sup>).

## Refugees:

- ◉ 73,293 arrived in 2010: Africa 13,325; Asia 52,695 (DHS, 2011<sup>^</sup>)
- ◉ The largest applications from China (55,000), Colombia (25,000), Ethiopia (11,000), Haiti (18,000) (UNHCR, 2010).
- ◉ The large numbers in the U.S.: Cambodia, Cuba, Liberia, Iran, Sudan, Somalia, Ukraine, Russia & Vietnam<sup>5</sup>

# Prevalence of Intimate Partner Violence



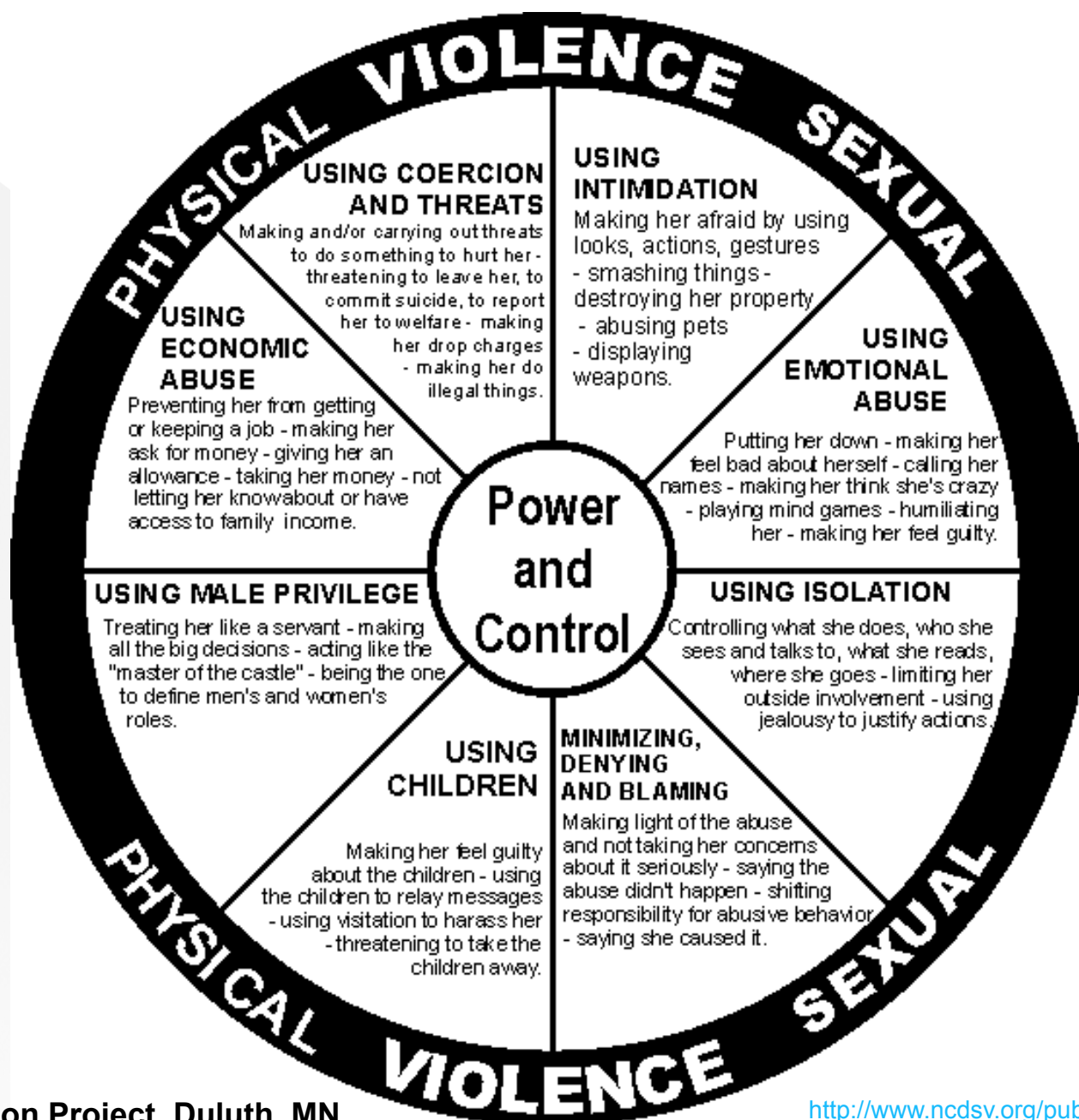
# Vulnerability

- ⦿ Poverty rate (2007)

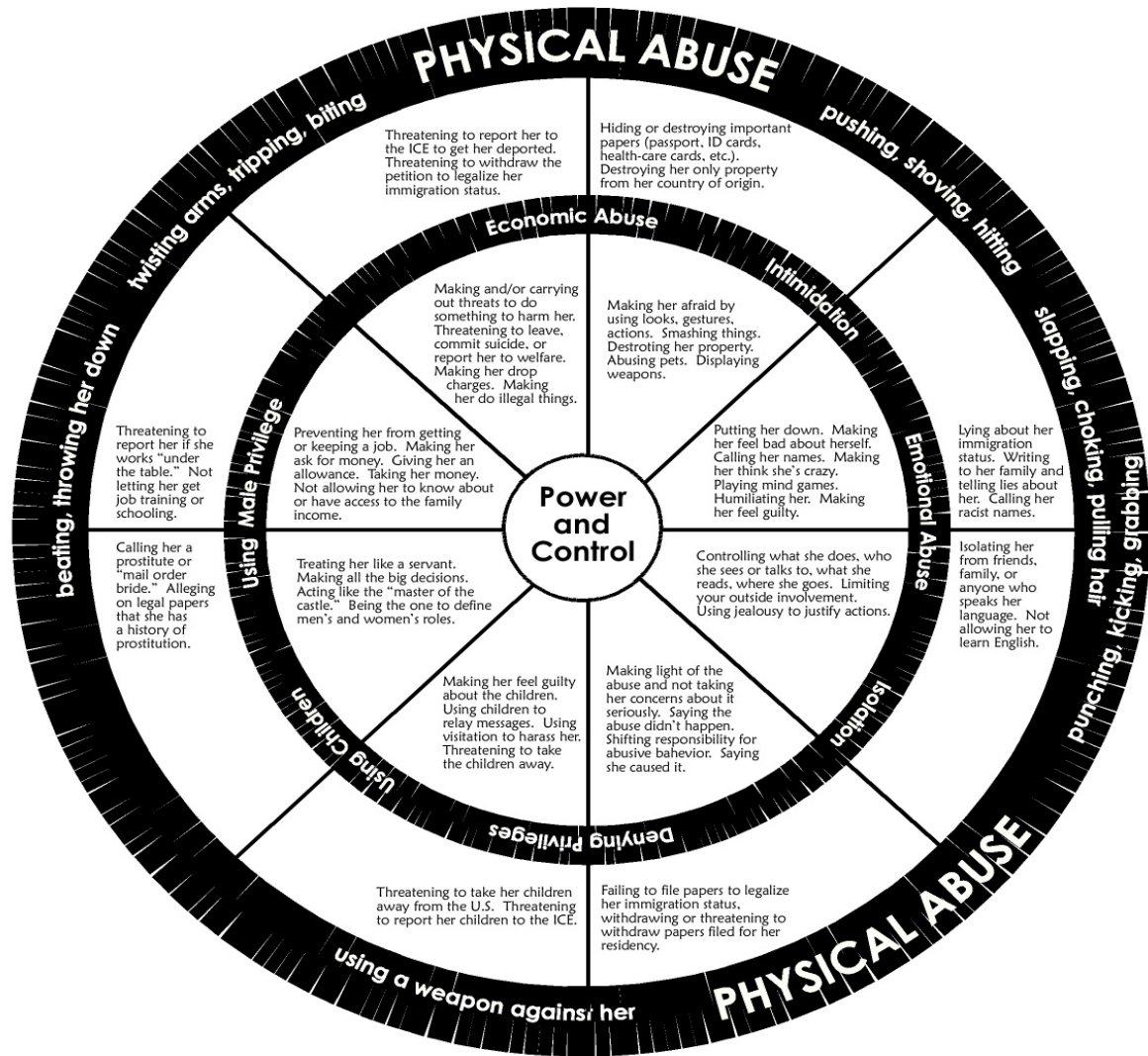
16.9% of immigrants/refugees and their U.S.-born children live in poverty > 11.4% for natives and their children

- ⦿ Lack health insurance (2007)

33.8% of foreign-born > 13.0% for native-born



# IMMIGRANT POWER AND CONTROL WHEEL



[http://www.ncdsv.org/images/Immigrant%20P&C%20wheel%20NO%20SHADING%20-%20NCDSV-ICE\\_updated2009.pdf](http://www.ncdsv.org/images/Immigrant%20P&C%20wheel%20NO%20SHADING%20-%20NCDSV-ICE_updated2009.pdf)

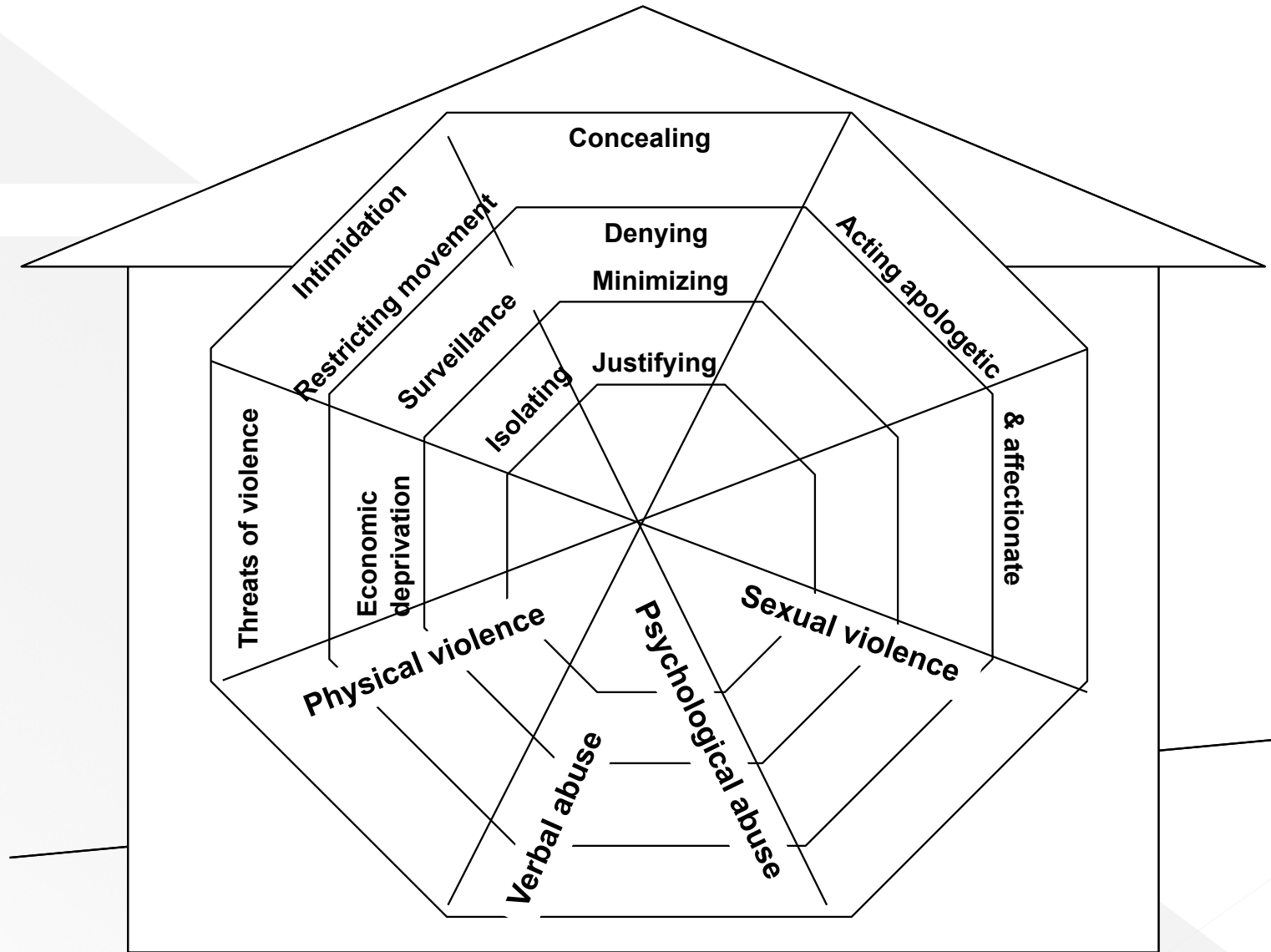
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# Power & Control Tactics Used against Immigrant Women

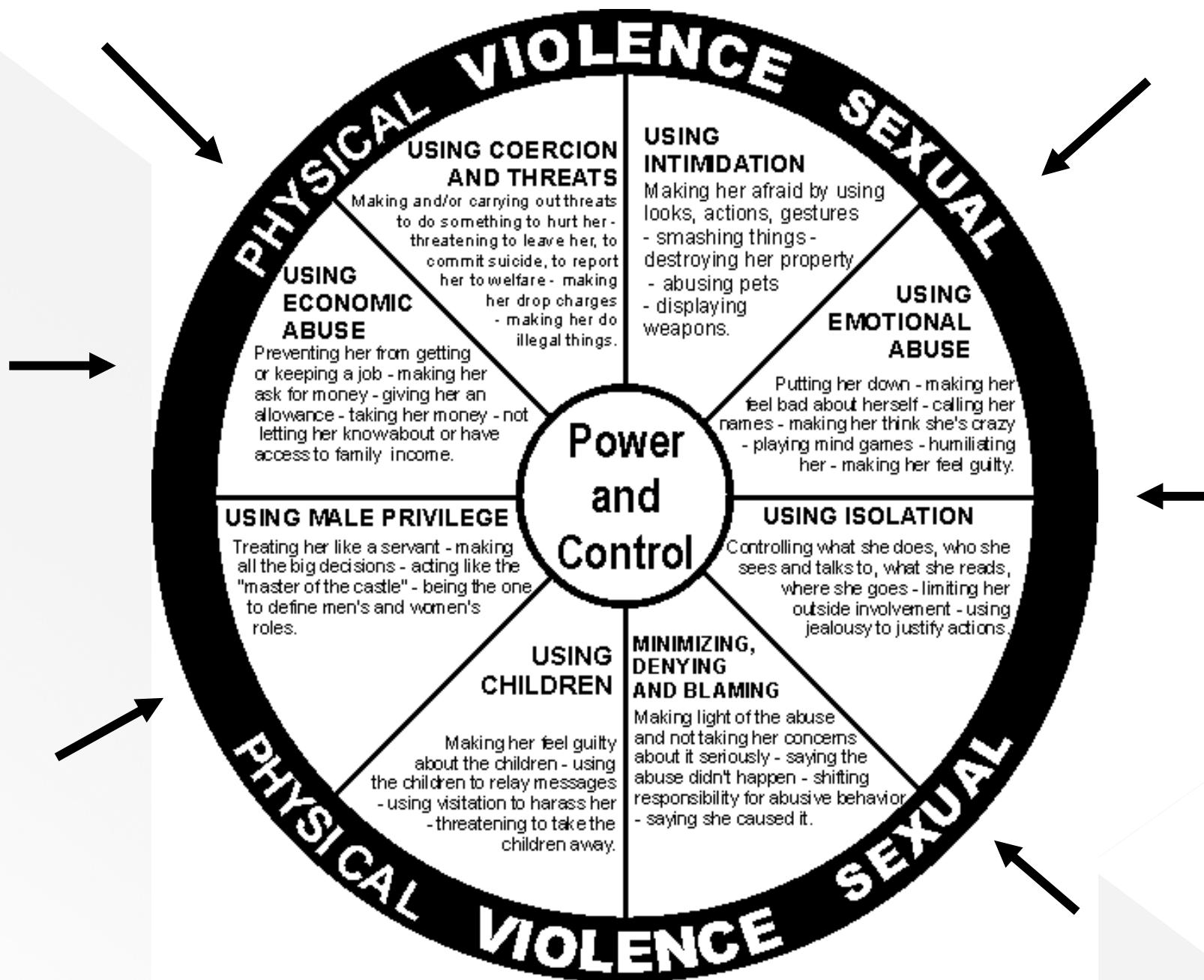
- Physical Violence
  - Sexual Violence
  - Emotional abuse
  - Intimidation
  - Coercion & threats
  - Economic abuse
  - Minimizing, denying, blaming
  - Using children
  - Isolation
  - Using male/citizen/LPR privilege
  - Failing to file papers
  - Threatening to withdraw papers
  - Threatening to report to ICE
  - Threatening to remove children from the U.S.
  - Destroying important papers
  - Not allowing her to learn/use English or her native languages
  - Calling her racist names
- 
- ```
graph LR; A[Using children] --- B[Threatening to remove children from the U.S.]; C[Using male/citizen/LPR privilege] --- D[Threatening to report to ICE]; C --- E[Threatening to withdraw papers]; C --- F[Failing to file papers]; C --- G[Calling her racist names];
```

## A web of intimate partner violence in the patriarchal clan system

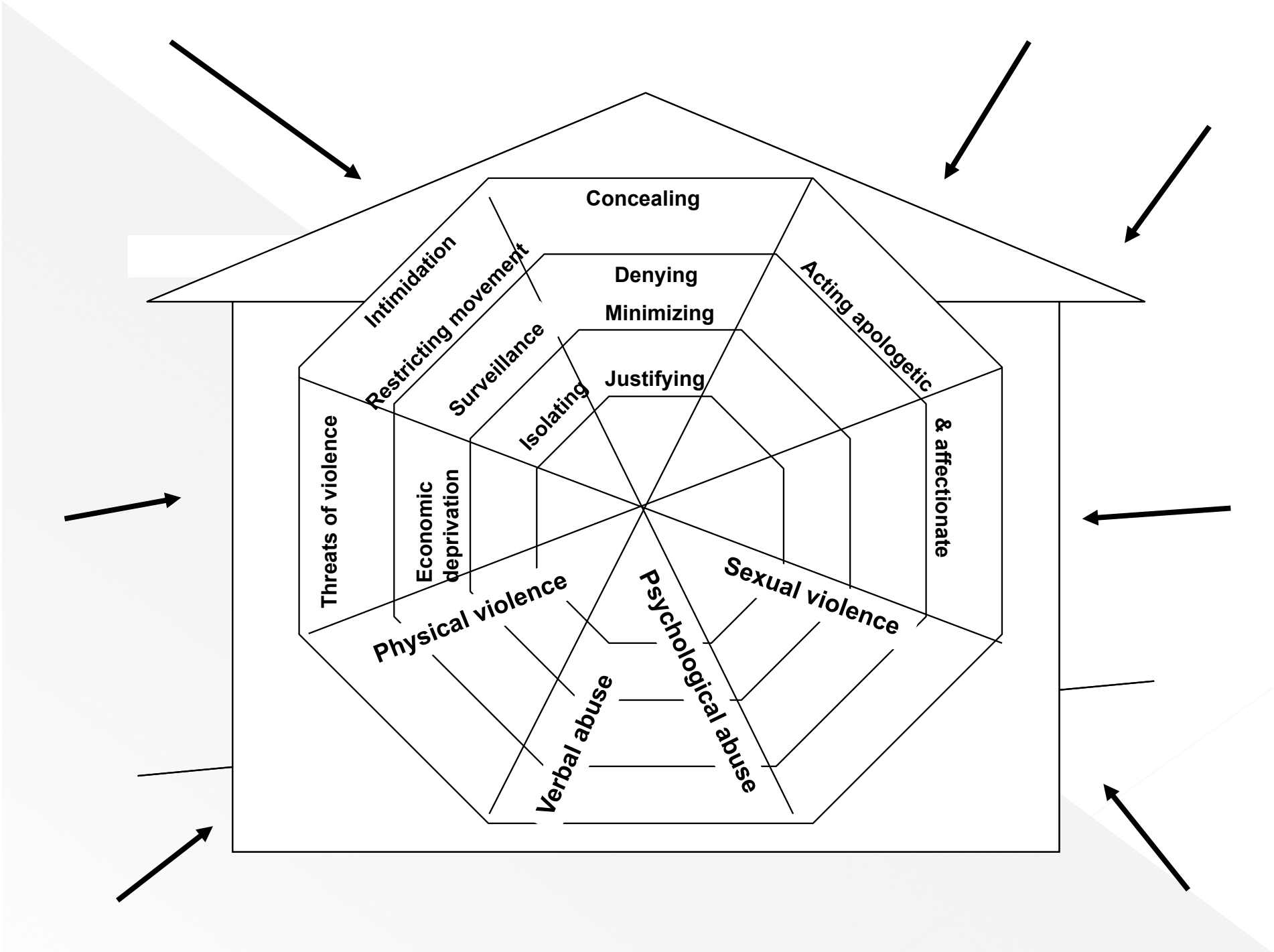


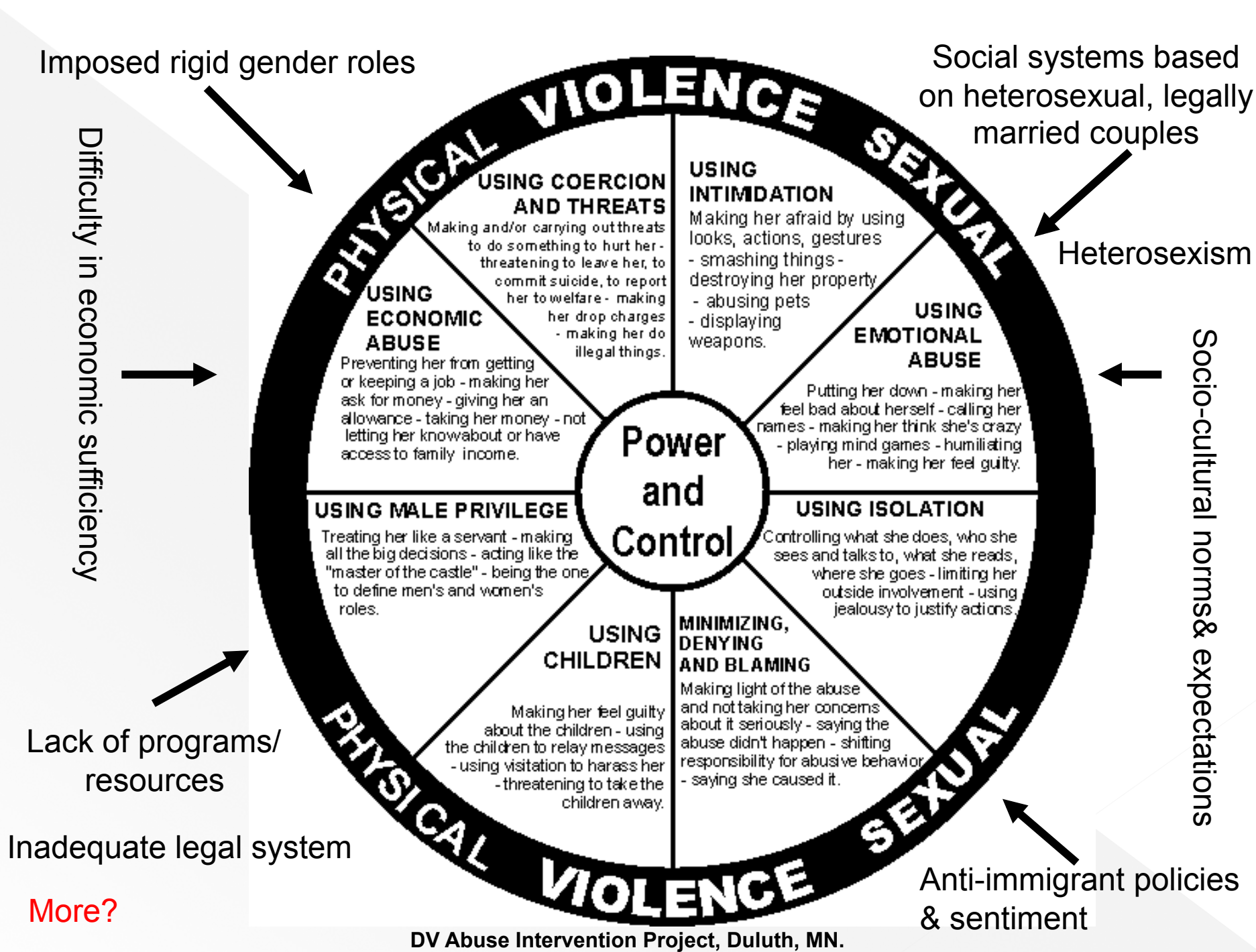
Yoshihama (2005). A web in the patriarchal clan system: Tactics of intimate partners in the Japanese socio-cultural context. *Violence Against Women*, 11, 1236-1262.





DV Abuse Intervention Project, Duluth, MN.





# Problem of **Aggregation** in Estimating IPV

|                         | MWR          | NVAWS        |
|-------------------------|--------------|--------------|
| <b>White</b>            | <b>26.8%</b> | <b>21.3%</b> |
| <b>African American</b> | <b>29.7%</b> | <b>26.8%</b> |
| <b>Asians</b>           | <b>9.7%</b>  | <b>12.8%</b> |
| <b>Latino</b>           | <b>20.5%</b> | <b>21.2%</b> |
| <b>Native American</b>  |              | <b>30.7%</b> |
| <b>Mixed race</b>       |              | <b>27.0%</b> |

**Prevalence**

**Disaggregated, Regional**

**14.0% -51.7%**

Although studies of aggregated Asians have found a lower rate physical/sexual IPV among Asian women compared to other population groups, studies of specific Asian groups have found a wide range of lifetime prevalence of IPV (14.0% -51.7%; Yoshihama, 2009). These findings suggest that the prevalence of IPV in Asian communities is not lower as found in large-scale studies, and may in fact be higher for some groups. Aggregation masks within-differences (see Yoshihama 2001 and Schwartz & DeKeseredy, 2000 for aggregation bias).

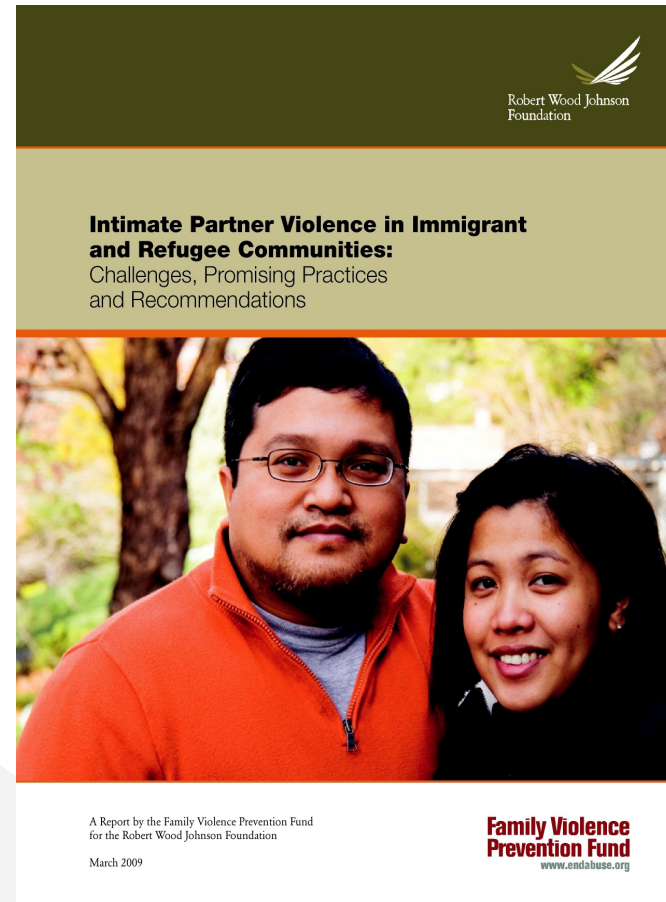
Black & Breiding, 2005 Mortality Weekly Report, 57: 113–118, 2008; National Violence Against Women Survey, 1995  
 Yoshihama, 2009, RWJF report

# Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Report (April 2009)

- ◉ **Intimate Partner Violence in Immigrant and Refugee Communities: Challenges, Promising Practices and Recommendations**
- ◉ **By Family Violence Prevention Fund, Runner M, Yoshihama, M & Novick S**

<http://www.rwjf.org/pr/product.jsp?id=41231>

<http://www.rwjf.org/files/research/ipvreport20090331.pdf>



# Risk of IPV among Foreign-born

↑ Homicide in general and IPV-related homicide

Risk higher among foreign-born than US-born



Non-fatal IPV

Foreign-born < US-born

Recent-immigrants > Long-term immigrants  
< US-

born

# Disparities in power & resources

- ◉ Immigration status
- ◉ English proficiency
- ◉ Knowledge of U.S. laws and systems
- ◉ Employability
- ◉ \$
- ➔ Place immigrant/refugee women in a vulnerable position.
- ◉ Ex. When a police officer arrives at the scene, the English-speaking partner may talk the police officer into believing that it was the immigrant/refugee woman who perpetrated the violence.

# Vulnerability

- Marriages to U.S. military personnel
- Marriages through international marriage brokers or dating services
- International marriages, often arranged by family networks
  - > US residents look for foreign-born women residing in their country of origin
  - > Older men marrying young women from overseas (often as a second wife)



## Immigration Status/Systems as Tools of Control

- ◉ Immigration Marriage Fraud Amendments of 1986 (8 U.S.C. § 1186a): A foreign spouse of a U.S. citizen is granted conditional residency status for 2 years, requiring the U.S. citizen to petition on behalf of his/her foreign spouse in order for the latter to obtain permanent residency.
- ◉ This policy provides partners a virtual license to abuse.
- ◉ Thanks to strong activism and legal advocacy, increased legal remedies are now available for immigrant battered women; however, many barriers still exist, such as complicated eligibility criteria and evidentiary standards, lack of bilingual lawyers, etc.

# Trauma, Loss, Isolation in Immigrants & Refugees

- A sense of isolation
  - > isolation due to immigration/migration is often intensified by abusive partners' tactics of control, surveillance, and threat.
- A smaller social network
- Loss of extended family
- Lower level of social support satisfaction

## *Cultural Practices, Values & Norms*

- ◉ Hierarchical and patriarchal family structure
- ◉ Role of In-laws, extended families
- ◉ Face saving, family honor, collective welfare
- ◉ Faith and fate: Women may accept their partners' violence as fate and believe (or be led to believe) that they have little control over it.
- ➔ Contribute to the pressure not to seek help, to endure and accept IPV
- ➔ Also sources of strength for many women in responding to and coping with challenges in their lives
- ➔ Not necessarily unique to immigrants/refugees, but are rather heightened in the current and historical context
- ➔ Cultural Freezing and Community Denial

# Help-seeking

- ◎ Only a small proportion of battered immigrant/ refugee women seek outside assistance .
- ◎ Aversion to contacting formal institutions
  - > Shame, embarrassment
  - > Face –saving, family honor
  - > Imposition of western values and expectations and lack of sociocultural competencies
- ◎ Preference for informal sources of support
  - > Family & friends not trained/ready
  - > Imposition of cultural ideals

# An Ethiopian women in Seattle

- If the victims call the police or speak out about their abuse, they may face loss of support or direct intimidation from the community....For refugee and immigrant women whose only social support comes from other Ethiopians, community disapproval or sanction may be too much to bear. (Sullivan et al., 2005, p. 930)

# South Asian woman

- illustrates the shame that divorce brings not only to women but also to families (Ayyub, 2000):

“No price the women will pay would be greater than the shame they would bring on the family if they chose to end their marriage. (p. 243) “

# *Cultural Freezing/Cultural ideals*

- ◎ The imposition of rigid values and normative behavioral expectations from one's country of origin
  - > Male domination & female subordination
  - > Often distorted, idealized, romanticized
- ◎ Does not happen in isolation from other social forces, e.g., racism, xenophobia, anti-immigrant/refugee sentiments (Yoshihama, 2009):
  - > High pressure to assimilate
  - > Faster acculturation in children (and women)
  - > Increased labor/social participation for women
  - > Men (those who used to enjoy higher status and more privileges in their country of origin) have more to lose
    - ➔ have a vested interest in keeping the idealized family structure where they assume authority, power, and control

# *Community Denial & Silencing*

- ◉ In the face of overt & covert discrimination, exploitation, violence, and harassment against immigrants & refugees
  - The survival of the community is often considered the priority.
  - Acknowledging IPV is seen as detrimental to the collective survival of the community.
  - Coupled with patriarchal ideology, women's suffering is not seen as a serious and urgent problem.
  - Strong pressure to maintain a positive image of their community and remain silent about the problem of IPV.
  - Those who violate these expectations may experience silencing, criticism, and sometimes even death threats



# Silencing

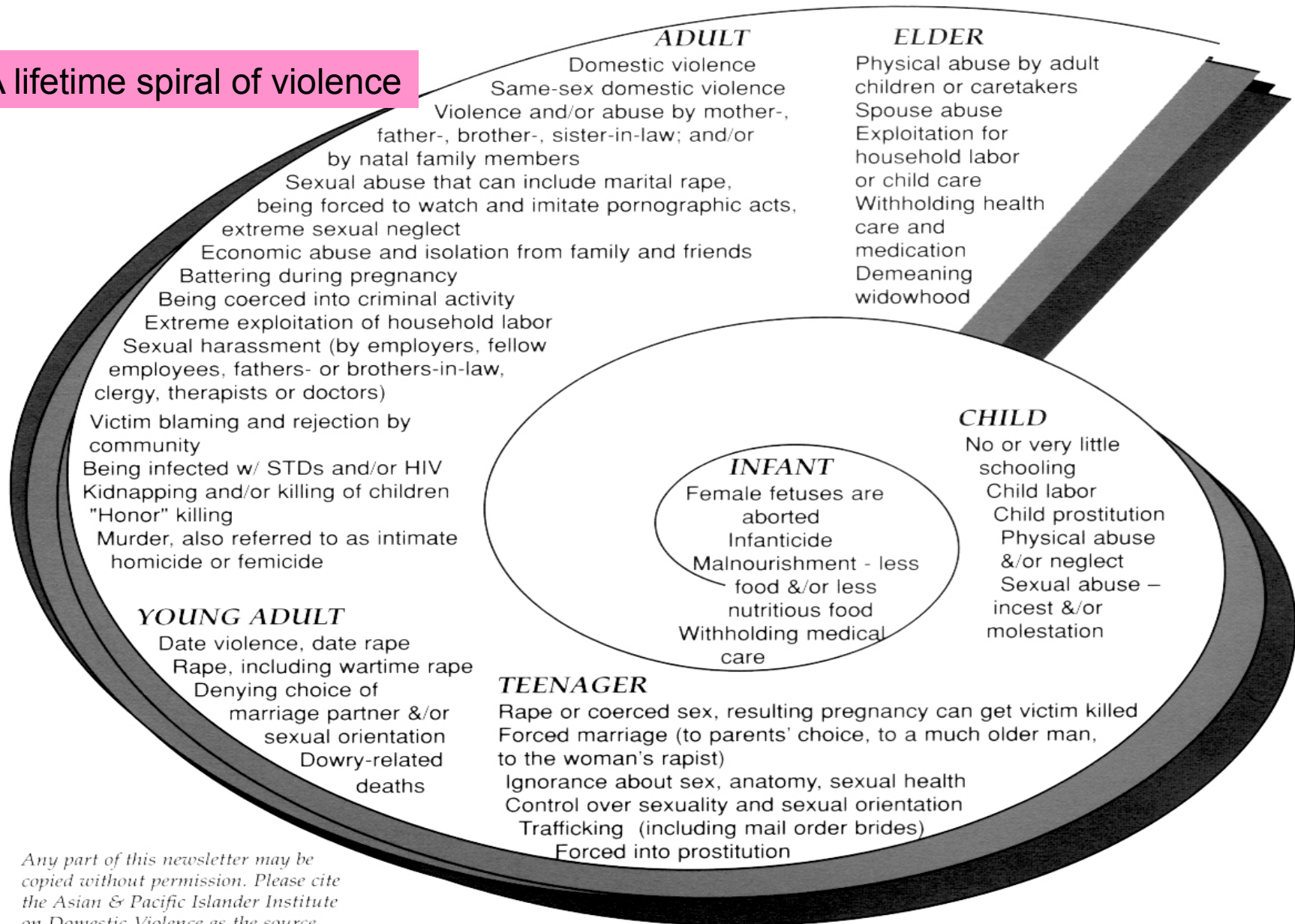
- ◉ Nilda Rimonte, a founding director of the Center for the Pacific Asian Family—the nation’s first shelter for API battered :

“After *Newsweek* quoted me as stating that there was a problem of wife-abuse in the Asian community, I received many irate phone calls from Asians angered by my exposure of the community’s “underbelly.” (p. 1313) “

# ABUSES ENDURED BY A WOMAN DURING HER LIFE CYCLE

Although some of these occur at a specific stage in a woman's life, most can reoccur or continue throughout her life. *Do you have anything to add?*

A lifetime spiral of violence



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