

Cultural factors that may put the mother at risk for intimate partner violence

[Family](#), [Mother](#)



Estelle is a new mother with a 1-day-old in the newborn nursery. She has large bruises on her upper arms and unusual circular lesions on her back.

There are a number of cultural factors that can put Estelle at risk for intimate partner violence. First, there is debate surrounding the roles of genetic inheritance, the environment, and predestination as it relates to the possibility of negative and aggressive traits and habits. According to Nature, aggressive behavior can be passed down from one generation to another simply by genetics; however, the environment in which one lives can also contribute to learned behaviors or what is perceived as normal. This belief incorporates genetic characteristics alongside the environment in which a person lives and surrounds themselves in as a mechanism for shaping their behavioral characteristics and actions. According to Feldman, Farh, and Wong (2018), other cultures believe that some type of an external factor is the sole influence on a person's behaviors and personality traits. For example, many cultures feel that nature and fate are the only things that contribute to a person's life, and the individual has no control to change their destiny. Other religions and cultures feel that God is the only being that has control over the actions and life of a human being, and thus nothing can change one's course of destiny in this world.

Based on Estelle's circumstance of having bruises and lesions all over her body, one might believe that her partner is abusing her and possibly cannot control the actions because it is part of his genetic makeup, or a result of his environment, or a higher being has influenced him and predetermined his actions to harm Estelle. Second, socioeconomic status can affect the quality

of life in both the home and the community. According to the American Psychological Association, cities across America reported that domestic violence is a direct result of people living in lower socioeconomic communities or people who are homeless. Those who suffer through domestic violence are likely to end up living in lower socioeconomic areas or may even become homeless. This can be attributed to women who are economically dependent on their abusive partners. They are less likely to leave them due to the financial stability they are receiving while being with them.

Estelle may be in the situation in which she is financially dependent on her partner, and this financial stability may drive her to withstand all the abuse she is experiencing from him. Also, living in an area with a high crime rate might normalize intimate violence between partners. Therefore, socioeconomic status, financial stability, and lifestyle factors are important considerations when determining if Estelle is suffering from domestic violence.

Third, according to the Nonfatal Domestic Violence, 2003-2012 report by the U. S. Department of Justice (DOJ), “ a larger percentage of simple assault against persons ages 18 to 49 was committed by a known offender (more than 50%) than a stranger (about 40%)”. The lesions on her back and the bruises on her arm indicate that Estelle may be experiencing simple assault. The DOJ also found a pattern that people who are “ age 18 or older experienced more serious domestic violence and simple assault perpetrated by intimate partners than by immediate family members of other relatives”.

After the age of 18, most serious relationships emerge as one develops a sense of identity, and intimate relationships may become more solidified at this point. As the relationship continues, Estelle may be even more at risk for serious domestic violence committed by her partner. Further, while domestic violence occurs in all ethnic and racial groups, it typically primarily affects women and children. The structure of a patriarchal household is a main contributor to why domestic violence occurs. Based on culture, certain factors such as “ income, education and status impact” and the need for “ men to express power” could contribute to domestic violence. It is possible that Estelle views her partner with respect despite her potentially dangerous situation, and feels she has to be submissive to such men as part of her cultural duties, or she may feel fear and anxiety toward the situation and may not want to tell anyone for fear that something worse could happen to either her or the baby.

Last, exposure to violence at an early developmental age can have impacts on social, emotional, psychological, behavioral, cognitive, and physiological functioning. If Estelle had been exposed to intimate partner violence at a young age, this could result in her having less control over her emotional regulation, on top of difficulty trusting others, severe adjustment problems, and difficulty getting along with others. Due to all of these issues, the possibility of Estelle having issues in school are very high. Exposure to intimate partner violence directly impacts the developmental level of someone because of the intense emotional and psychological damage it creates. This is affirmed by other research that found an inverse correlation

between education and domestic violence (Rapp et. al., 2012). If it is assessed that Estelle or her partner has a low level of education, it is more likely that she will be experiencing domestic violence within the relationship.

Additionally, if Estelle's mother had experienced intimate partner violence while pregnant with Estelle, this could have affected the amount of parental warmth, caregiving and development of healthy attachment she received. In a study involving 50 domestic violence victims and 13, 000 children aged 1-2 years old, researchers found that nearly 38% had one or more problems with emotion regulation, two-thirds were struggling to separate from a parent, and nearly 42% were crying often. It is clear that the psychological and emotional impact of intimate partner violence is substantial, and based on these findings, the couple's child is at risk of experiencing the same cycle of violence, lack of love, and the probability of repeating offensive behaviors.