

Chapter 5.

Psychological Aggression by Intimate Partners

There is significant evidence that psychological aggression is a strong predictor of negative health outcomes in the general population (e.g., Coker et al., 2000, 2002; Lawrence et al., 2009). Psychological aggression is also strongly associated with other forms of violence (e.g., Hamby and Sugarman, 1999; Follingstad et al., 1990). Remarkably, very few national estimates of psychological aggression are available.

The only survey to provide national estimates of psychological aggression against American Indian and Alaska Native people is the 2011 National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey (NISVS). The analysis of the 2010 data from the general population sample did not provide estimates specifically for American Indian and Alaska Native women or men. The 2011 survey only provided lifetime estimates. Psychological aggression included expressive aggression and coercive control. Results showed that 63.8 percent of non-Hispanic American Indian and Alaska Native women (approximately 523,000) had experienced expressive aggression and coercive control in their lifetime, and 47.2 percent of non-Hispanic American Indian and Alaska Native men (approximately 368,000) had experienced expressive aggression and coercive control in their lifetime.

Much remains to be known about the psychological aggression experienced by American Indian and Alaska Native women and men. The analysis in this chapter uses a larger sample than previously used to examine expressive aggression and coercive control experienced by American Indian and Alaska Native women and

Key Findings

Among American Indian and Alaska Native women, 66.4 percent have experienced psychological aggression by an intimate partner in their lifetime, and 25.5 percent have experienced it in the past year. Among American Indian and Alaska Native men, 73.0 percent have experienced psychological aggression by an intimate partner in their lifetime, and 27.3 percent have experienced it in the past year. Among American Indian and Alaska Native victims, 91 percent of women and 88 percent of men have experienced psychological aggression by an interracial intimate partner.

men. It also uses a more comprehensive measure of psychological aggression than previously used. This measure of psychological aggression includes the control of reproductive or sexual health. This chapter provides a thorough analysis of psychological aggression experienced by American Indian and Alaska Native women and men.

Prevalence of Psychological Aggression by Intimate Partners Against Women

Lifetime and past-year estimates of psychological aggression by intimate partners against women are presented in table 5.1.

Definition of NIJ Measures of Psychological Aggression by Intimate Partners

Psychological aggression by intimate partners includes expressive aggression, coercive control, and the control of reproductive or sexual health. Expressive aggression includes instances when perpetrators acted very angry towards the victim in a way that seemed dangerous; told the victim that s/he was a loser, a failure, or not good enough; called the victim names like ugly, fat, crazy, or stupid; insulted, humiliated, or made fun of the victim in front of others; and told the victim that no one else would want him or her. Coercive control includes instances when perpetrators tried to keep the victim from seeing or talking to her/his family or friends; made decisions for the victim that should have been hers/his to make, such as the clothes s/he wears, things s/he eats, or the friends s/he has; kept track of the victim by demanding to know where s/he was and what s/he was doing; made threats to physically harm the victim; threatened to hurt themselves or commit suicide when they were upset with the victim; threatened to hurt a pet or to take a pet away from the victim; threatened to hurt someone the victim loves; hurt someone the victim loves; threatened to take the victim's children away; kept the victim from leaving the house when s/he wanted to go; kept the victim from having money for her/his own use; destroyed something that was important to the victim; and said things like "if I can't have you, then no one can." The control of reproductive or sexual health includes instances when perpetrators tried to stop the victim from using birth control and instances when perpetrators refused to use a condom when the victim wanted them to use one. In addition, the control of reproductive or sexual health includes instances when male perpetrators tried to get a female victim pregnant when she did not want to become pregnant and instances when female perpetrators tried to get pregnant when a male victim did not want them to get pregnant.

Differences Between CDC and NIJ Measures of Psychological Aggression by Intimate Partners

NIJ's measure of psychological aggression by intimate partners includes (a) expressive aggression, (b) coercive control, and (c) the control of reproductive or sexual health. There are no differences between NIJ's and CDC's measures of expressive aggression, coercive control, and the control of reproductive or sexual health (other than differences in data cleaning and data analysis). The only difference is that the control of reproductive or sexual health is included in NIJ's measure of psychological aggression. It is not included in CDC's measure of psychological aggression. Instead, it is included separately as an indicator of violence by intimate partners (along with physical violence, stalking, sexual violence, and psychological aggression). Additional details are available in Rosay's (2015) technical report (see chapters 19 and 26).

More than 1 in 2 American Indian and Alaska Native women (66.4 percent) have experienced psychological aggression by intimate partners in their lifetime:

- 56.9 percent have experienced expressive aggression.
- 61.5 percent have experienced coercive control.
- 10.6 percent have experienced the control of reproductive or sexual health.

Overall, more than 1.2 million American Indian and Alaska Native women have experienced psychological aggression by intimate partners in their lifetime.

More than 1 in 4 American Indian and Alaska Native women (25.5 percent) have experienced psychological aggression by intimate partners in the past year:

- 20.8 percent have experienced expressive aggression.
- 20.3 percent have experienced coercive control.
- 4.0 percent have experienced the control of reproductive or sexual health.

Overall, more than 465,000 American Indian and Alaska Native women have experienced psychological aggression by intimate partners in the past year.

Relative to non-Hispanic White-only women, American Indian and Alaska Native women are —

- 1.3 times as likely to have experienced psychological aggression by intimate partners in their lifetime and 1.6 times as likely to have experienced it in the past year ($p < .05$).

Table 5.1 Weighted Estimates of Psychological Aggression by Intimate Partners Against Women

Psychological Aggression by Intimate Partners Against Women	American Indian or Alaska Native	Non-Hispanic White Only	Relative Risk
Lifetime Estimate	66.4%	52.0%	1.3
Expressive Aggression	56.9%	44.2%	1.3
Coercive Control	61.5%	42.7%	1.4
Control of Reproductive or Sexual Health	10.6%	8.0%	NS
Past-Year Estimate	25.5%	16.1%	1.6
Expressive Aggression	20.8%	11.6%	1.8
Coercive Control	20.3%	11.8%	1.7
Control of Reproductive or Sexual Health	4.0%	1.3%	NS

NS = Percentages across racial and ethnic groups are not significantly different ($p > .05$).
 Note: Confidence intervals are available in appendix table A.13.

- 1.3 times as likely to have experienced expressive aggression in their lifetime and 1.8 times as likely to have experienced it in the past year ($p < .05$).
- 1.4 times as likely to have experienced coercive control in their lifetime and 1.7 times as likely to have experienced it in the past year ($p < .05$).

Differences across racial and ethnic groups for the control of reproductive or sexual health are not statistically significant ($p > .05$).

Prevalence of Psychological Aggression by Intimate Partners Against Men

Lifetime and past-year estimates of psychological aggression by intimate partners against men are presented in table 5.2.

More than 1 in 2 American Indian and Alaska Native men (73.0 percent) have experienced psychological aggression by intimate partners in their lifetime:

- 43.6 percent have experienced expressive aggression.
- 67.4 percent have experienced coercive control.
- 19.9 percent have experienced the control of reproductive or sexual health.

Overall, more than 1.2 million American Indian and Alaska Native men have experienced psychological aggression by intimate partners in their lifetime.

More than 1 in 4 American Indian and Alaska Native men (27.3 percent) have experienced psychological aggression by intimate partners in the past year:

- 12.1 percent have experienced expressive aggression.
- 21.7 percent have experienced coercive control.

Table 5.2 Weighted Estimates of Psychological Aggression by Intimate Partners Against Men

Psychological Aggression by Intimate Partners Against Men	American Indian or Alaska Native	Non-Hispanic White Only	Relative Risk
Lifetime Estimate	73.0%	52.7%	1.4
Expressive Aggression	43.6%	35.3%	NS
Coercive Control	67.4%	44.4%	1.5
Control of Reproductive or Sexual Health	19.9%	10.0%	2.0
Past-Year Estimate	27.3%	19.3%	NS
Expressive Aggression	12.1%	9.5%	NS
Coercive Control	21.7%	15.3%	NS
Control of Reproductive or Sexual Health	6.7%	1.1%	6.1

NS = Percentages across racial and ethnic groups are not significantly different ($p > .05$).
 Note: Confidence intervals are available in appendix table A.14.

- 6.7 percent have experienced the control of reproductive or sexual health.

Overall, more than 470,000 American Indian and Alaska Native men have experienced psychological aggression by intimate partners in the past year.

Relative to non-Hispanic White-only men, American Indian and Alaska Native men are —

- 1.4 times as likely to have experienced psychological aggression by intimate partners in their lifetime ($p < .05$).
- 1.5 times as likely to have experienced coercive control in their lifetime ($p < .05$).
- 2.0 times as likely to have experienced the control of reproductive or sexual health in their lifetime and 6.1 times as likely to have experienced it in the past year ($p < .05$).

All other differences across racial and ethnic groups are not statistically significant ($p > .05$). Differences between American Indian and Alaska Native women and men are not statistically significant ($p > .05$; see the appendix).

Lifetime Forms of Psychological Aggression by Intimate Partners

Table 5.3 provides additional details on the behaviors that were experienced by American Indian and Alaska Native women and men who had experienced psychological aggression by intimate partners in their lifetime.

More than half of American Indian and Alaska Native female lifetime victims experienced very angry actions that seemed dangerous (68.2 percent); were told they were losers, failures, or not good enough (53.6 percent); were called names like ugly, fat, crazy, or stupid (55.8 percent); were insulted, humiliated, or made fun of in front of others (52.2 percent); were kept from seeing or talking to family or friends (55.2 percent); had decisions made for them that should have been theirs to make (50.2 percent); and were tracked by being asked about their locations and actions (62.6 percent). Only one behavior was experienced by more than half of American Indian and Alaska Native male lifetime victims: 62.0 percent of American Indian and Alaska Native male lifetime victims were tracked by being asked about their locations and actions.

Table 5.3 Weighted Estimates of Lifetime Psychological Aggression by Intimate Partners Experienced by American Indian and Alaska Native Victims

Lifetime Psychological Aggression by Intimate Partners Experienced by American Indian and Alaska Native Victims	Female Victims	Male Victims
Expressive Aggression		
Experienced very angry actions that seemed dangerous	68.2%	28.0%
Told they were losers, failures, or not good enough	53.6%	28.6%
Called names like ugly, fat, crazy, and stupid	55.8%	35.6%
Insulted, humiliated, or made fun of	52.2%	26.2%
Told that no one else would want them	39.8%	13.9%

Table 5.3 Weighted Estimates of Lifetime Psychological Aggression by Intimate Partners Experienced by American Indian and Alaska Native Victims (continued)

Lifetime Psychological Aggression by Intimate Partners Experienced by American Indian and Alaska Native Victims	Female Victims	Male Victims
Coercive Control		
Kept from seeing or talking to family or friends	55.2%	26.6%
Had decisions made for them that should have been theirs to make	50.2%	29.9%
Was tracked by being asked about locations and actions	62.6%	62.0%
Threatened with being physically harmed	47.8%	22.0%
Threatened with perpetrators hurting themselves when upset	38.2%	24.1%
Threatened with having pets hurt or taken away	16.8%	2.4%
Threatened with having loved ones hurt	21.4%	2.6%
Had loved ones who were hurt	17.9%	4.8%
Threatened with having children taken away	40.0%	25.1%
Kept from leaving the house when they wanted to go	43.5%	16.1%
Kept from having their own money to use	30.6%	12.5%
Had something that was important to them destroyed	40.8%	28.4%
Told things like "If I can't have you, then no one can"	40.0%	18.5%
Control of Reproductive or Sexual Health		
Experienced unwanted pregnancy attempts	7.7%	21.7%
Experienced refusals to use condoms	14.2%	16.5%

Notes: Samples are restricted to victims of psychological aggression by intimate partners. Confidence intervals are available in appendix table A.15.

Most differences across gender groups were statistically significant ($p < .05$; results not shown). American Indian and Alaska Native female victims were significantly more likely than American Indian and Alaska Native male victims to experience all forms of expressive aggression, except being called names like ugly, fat, crazy, or stupid. American Indian and Alaska Native female victims were significantly more likely than American Indian and Alaska Native male victims to experience 9 of the 13 forms of coercive control (all except being tracked by being asked about locations and actions, being threatened by perpetrators hurting themselves, being threatened with having children taken away, and having something important destroyed). American Indian and Alaska Native male victims were significantly more likely than American Indian and Alaska Native female victims to experience unwanted pregnancy attempts.

Race and Ethnicity of Perpetrators

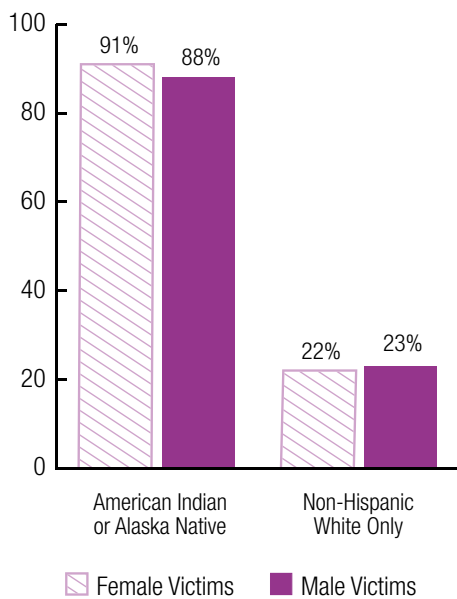
Figures 5.1 and 5.2 provide information about the percentage of victims who have experienced psychological aggression in their lifetime by interracial and intraracial intimate partners. Interracial intimate partners are of a different race and ethnicity than the victim, and intraracial intimate partners are of the same race and ethnicity as the victim. All differences across racial and ethnic groups are statistically significant ($p < .05$).

American Indian and Alaska Native victims are significantly more likely than non-Hispanic White-only victims to have experienced psychological aggression by an interracial intimate partner:

- Female victims are 4.1 times as likely to have experienced psychological aggression by an

Figure 5.1 Interracial Psychological Aggression by Intimate Partners: Weighted Estimates for Lifetime Victims

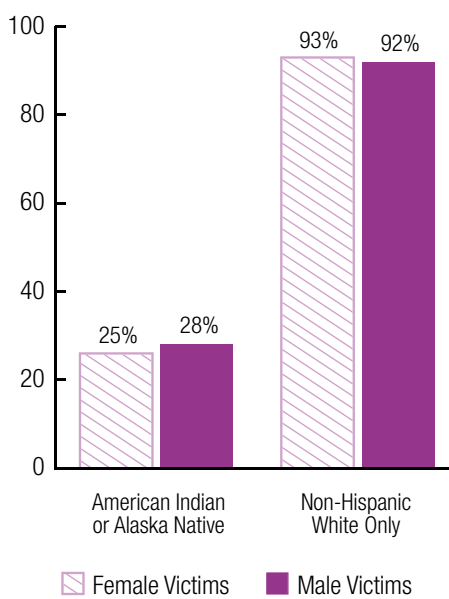
Percentage of victims experiencing psychological aggression by an interracial intimate partner



Notes: Samples are restricted to victims of psychological aggression by intimate partners. Confidence intervals are available in appendix table A.16.

Figure 5.2 Intraracial Psychological Aggression by Intimate Partners: Weighted Estimates for Lifetime Victims

Percentage of victims experiencing psychological aggression by an intraracial intimate partner



Notes: Samples are restricted to victims of psychological aggression by intimate partners. Confidence intervals are available in appendix table A.16.

interracial intimate partner as non-Hispanic White-only female victims (91 percent versus 22 percent).

- Male victims are 3.8 times as likely to have experienced psychological aggression by an interracial intimate partner as non-Hispanic White-only male victims (88 percent versus 23 percent).

Conversely, American Indian and Alaska Native victims are significantly less likely than non-Hispanic White-only victims to have experienced psychological aggression by an intraracial intimate partner:

- Female victims are 0.3 times as likely to have experienced psychological aggression by an intraracial intimate partner as non-Hispanic White-only female victims (25 percent versus 93 percent).
- Male victims are 0.3 times as likely to have experienced psychological aggression by an intraracial intimate partner as non-Hispanic White-only male victims (28 percent versus 92 percent).

Summary

Almost 7 in 10 American Indian and Alaska Native women (66.4 percent) and more than 7 in 10 American Indian and Alaska Native men (73.0 percent) have experienced psychological aggression by intimate partners in their lifetime. It is important to emphasize that not all forms of psychological aggression are included, and psychological aggression by non-intimate partners is not included. Differences between men and women are not statistically significant ($p > .05$).

The estimate for American Indian and Alaska Native women is similar to the 2011 NISVS estimate of 63.8 percent (Breiding et al., 2014), but the estimate for American Indian and Alaska Native men is substantially and significantly higher than the 2011 NISVS estimate of 47.2 percent ($p < .05$). This difference is not due to including the control of reproductive and sexual health. Even when the control of reproductive and sexual health is excluded, the lifetime estimate for psychological

aggression by intimate partners against American Indian and Alaska Native men (72.9 percent) remains substantially and significantly higher (95% CI = 65.6% to 80.3%).

For both men and women, the most common category of psychological aggression is coercive control. Coercive control was experienced by more than half of American Indian and Alaska Native women (61.5 percent) and men (67.4 percent). Differences between men and women are not statistically significant for any category of psychological aggression ($p > .05$). The most common form of coercive control, for both American Indian and Alaska Native women and men, included a perpetrator keeping track of them by demanding to know where they were and what they were doing.

More than 1 in 4 American Indian and Alaska Native women (25.5 percent) and more than 1 in 4 American Indian and Alaska Native men (27.3 percent) have experienced psychological aggression by intimate partners in the past year. As with lifetime experiences, differences across gender groups are not statistically significant ($p > .05$).

Relative to non-Hispanic White-only women, American Indian and Alaska Native women are 1.3 times as likely to have experienced psychological aggression by intimate partners in their lifetime, and 1.6 times as likely to have experienced it in the past year. Relative to non-Hispanic White-only men, American Indian and Alaska Native men are 1.4 times as likely to have experienced psychological aggression by intimate partners in their lifetime (past-year differences are not statistically significant, $p > .05$).

American Indian and Alaska Native victims are significantly more likely to have experienced psychological aggression by interracial intimate partners and significantly less likely to have experienced psychological aggression by intraracial intimate partners than non-Hispanic White-only victims. This is true for both female and male victims.