

<http://blog.oup.com>

Search

Menu



Domestic violence and the NFL. Are players at greater risk for committing the act?



Social Forces

Published in partnership with the Department of Sociology at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, *Social Forces* (<http://www.oxfordjournals.org/page/5766/2>) is recognized as a global leader among social research journals. The journal emphasizes cutting-edge sociological inquiry and explores realms the discipline shares with psychology, anthropology, political science, history, and economics.

[READ MORE](#)

(HTTF

BY [ARNE KALLEBERG](http://blog.oup.com/authors/arne-kalleberg/) ([HTTP://BLOG.OUP.COM/AUTHORS/ARNE-KALLEBERG/](http://blog.oup.com/authors/arne-kalleberg/)), [GRETA FRIEDEMANN-SÁNCHEZ](http://blog.oup.com/authors/greta-friedemann-sanchez/) ([HTTP://BLOG.OUP.COM/AUTHORS/GRETA-FRIEDEMANN-SANCHEZ/](http://blog.oup.com/authors/greta-friedemann-sanchez/)) AND [RODRIGO LOVATÓN](http://blog.oup.com/authors/rodrigo-lovaton/) ([HTTP://BLOG.OUP.COM/AUTHORS/RODRIGO-LOVATON/](http://blog.oup.com/authors/rodrigo-lovaton/))

OCTOBER 10TH 2014

As the domestic violence controversy in the NFL has captured the attention of fans and global media, it seems it has become the No. 1 off-field issue for the league. To gain further perspective into the matter of domestic violence and the current NFL situation, I spoke with Greta Friedemann-Sánchez, PhD and Rodrigo Lovatón, authors of the article, “Intimate Partner Violence in Colombia: Who Is at Risk?” (<http://oxford.ly/1Ep6YTz>) published in *Social Forces* (<http://oxford.ly/1nbLrbg>), that explores the prevalence of intimate partner violence and the certain risk factors that increase its likelihood.

What do you think of the recent media coverage of domestic violence in the NFL?

In 2010, the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimated that in the United States 24% of women and 13% of men have experienced severe physical violence by an intimate partner at some point during their life. Furthermore, the Bureau of Justice Statistics (Department of Justice) calculates that domestic violence accounted for 21% of all violent victimizations between 2003 and 2012 (<http://www.bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/ndv0312.pdf>) and about 1.5 million cases in 2013 (<http://www.bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/cv13.pdf>). If emotional abuse and stalking are taken into

account, the prevalence rates increase. In some countries the prevalence is even higher. In Colombia, for example, 39% of women have experienced physical violence in their lifetimes. The recent media coverage of domestic violence shows that this is an important policy issue that has not received adequate attention in the United States or internationally. Unfortunately, this is a missed opportunity to educate the public on the high prevalence rates and the negative effects domestic violence has, not only for the victim but for all the members of a family. Equally invisible in the coverage is the fact that domestic violence is an “equal opportunity” event, meaning that it is present in families regardless of socioeconomic status, race, ethnic affiliation, and so on. Domestic violence, and more specifically intimate partner violence, can be just as present in NFL players’ families who are on the eye of the public, as it can be in any other family. The issue, however, remains hidden for the most part. It takes a celebrity to be involved for the issue to gain visibility. In that sense, we are glad the media covered it. This is a policy issue that needs to be appropriately analyzed and addressed.

What do you think is an appropriate punishment for an NFL player who is convicted of domestic violence?

We agree that a professional sports organization, that has extensive media coverage with a large audience, including children and adolescents, should not allow a player who is convicted of domestic violence to participate. Organized sports organizations sell more than just games, they sell the personalities and lives of their players. Players are often held as role models, their careers and lives are admired. To allow a player to continue playing would endorse and normalize violent behavior. Intimate partner violence has long term negative physical, emotional, and economic consequences for the victims, which are often overlooked. In fact, children who witness violence at home have negative emotional and educational outcomes too. Witnessing violence as a child or being a victim of violence as a child are some of the strongest predictors for becoming a victim or a perpetrator of violence later in life. Therefore, the NFL or any sports organization should reject this kind of behavior by disallowing domestic violence offenders from participating in any of their activities.

Do you think that giving a person who commits domestic violence a more severe punishment will decrease the chances that the person will commit violence again?

Types and intensity of violence are varied, and so are the legal mechanisms in place to protect victims and punish batterers. Victims do not always get the support they need from law enforcement. Furthermore, protective and punitive laws are not always enforced in an adequate manner, consequently, victims have a chance to be re-victimized and re-traumatized as the perpetrators become even more violent as a result of the victims’ reporting. The proportion of domestic violence crimes reported to the police represents about 50% of all identified cases between 2003 and 2012 in the United States, according to the [Bureau of Justice Statistics \(http://www.bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/ndv0312.pdf\)](http://www.bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/ndv0312.pdf), Department of Justice. These issues are recursive. The experience for victims outside of the United States can be even direr as domestic violence legislation may be in its infancy.

Do you think that the recent media attention surrounding domestic and/or that this will increase or decrease the likelihood of/reduce other victims coming forward to report abuse?

Neither. Resolving intimate partner violence requires a multi-pronged approach. Increased visibility of the problem afforded by the recent media coverage might propel better law enforcement, increased funding for research, and implementation of prevention pilot programs that engage men and boys, just to name a few. We need better and more preventive, protective, and punitive mechanisms in place. In addition, the mechanisms in place need to be evaluated for effectiveness in responding to the issue. Until some of these steps happen, simply having more media attention will not have an effect on reporting.



Abandoned child's shoe on balcony with diffuse filter. © sil63 via iStock
<http://www.istockphoto.com/photo/abandoned-child-s-shoe-6094741>.

What are some of the reasons women tend to stay in domestic violence situations?

Why do perpetrators exercise violence against their intimate partners? These questions go hand in hand, yet it is usually the first that is asked, although both are increasingly in the scope of research given the increase in violence against women worldwide. Women's economic dependence on their partners, which gets amplified when children are present, contributes to women being locked into violent situations. Lack of employment options, being unemployed, having low-wage employment makes women financially dependent on their partners. Lack of affordable day care, day care with limited hours, and school schedules without after-school programs limit women's participation in employment. Even women who are employed and have livable wages might find it hard to leave if temporary shelters and affordable housing are not available. But the barriers to exiting a violent relationship are not only material. Being abused is a stigmatizing experience. Victims are reluctant to be shamed by their family, friends, and society at large. In addition, the exercise of controlling and humiliating behaviors on the part of batterers has the effect of lowering the victims' self-esteem and self-efficacy. Victims may doubt their capacity to survive on their own and with their children. But controlling behaviors also include batterers' being effective at sabotaging the victims' efforts to access her social support network, to gain employment, or to arrange an alternative living place. In many instances, the episodes of abuse are interspersed by weeks or months of relative calm, and victims may believe their partners have changed, only to find themselves in the same or worse situation. In addition, societies have cultural scripts of what is included in the marital contract, which may justify violence under certain circumstances. Gender norms give men the right to control their intimate partner's behavior, to exert influence, and to resolve disputes with violence. Furthermore, women are socialized to prioritize the children and family "unity" over their welfare; women may perceive that the children will be negatively affected by a separation, not knowing the negative effects they may already be experiencing.

Who are most at risk for being a victim of domestic violence?

Several factors contribute to the risk of being a victim of intimate partner violence. While there are general patterns, the specifics may vary by country. In our recent study using data from [Colombia's](http://sf.oxfordjournals.org/content/early/2012/10/09/sf.sos131) Demographic and Health Surveys, we found that the highest risk factors were associated with the maltreatment of a woman's partner when he was a child, and current child maltreatment by the woman's partner. Higher risk is associated with lower educational status of both partners, lower socioeconomic status (only for physical violence), for younger women, and for women working outside of the home. This last factor is especially interesting given the role that income plays in household negotiation dynamics. Gender differences in power among family members affect each member's economic choices and behavior, including individual's bargaining over the allocation of material and time resources within the household, over gender norms, and even over how much abuse to exert or resist. It has long been hypothesized that income provides women with strong leverage in family negotiations. But our results and those found in [studies in other countries](http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1728-4457.2014.00650.x/full) are revealing that the dynamics of negotiation and violence may be heavily mediated by gender norms. In effect, gender norms about women's socially acceptable

behavior, including working for pay, might trump the leverage they can effect with income. In addition, we do not know the effect of relative wages of both partners on violence. What is known for the United States is that economic stress in a family increases the risk for violence. Gender norms of masculinity that prescribe men as the breadwinners have an effect: men who are unemployed (http://new.vawnet.org/Assoc_Files_VAWnet/AR_EconomicStress.pdf) are at greater risk for being perpetrators of violence. The same is true for men who endorse rigid views of masculinity (<http://jmm.sagepub.com/content/10/3/322.refs?patientinform-links=yes&legid=spjmm;10/3/322>), including the norms that men should dominate women.

How can we best help those most at risk of domestic violence?

Interventions at the individual and community level that address gender equitable norms and the construction of gender relations via socialization are simultaneously protective (batterer intervention programs) and preventive. In the same vein, promoting boys and men's participation in activities considered feminine under rigid norms of masculinity, such as taking care of children, of the sick and disabled, and doing domestic work. Another line of response is to work on those risk factors that can be shaped by public policies, such as promoting equitable access to employment for women and an extended access to education to the population in general. In addition, special care is required for those groups that are at greater risk to suffer from violence, such as households with lower socioeconomic status, with younger women, more children, and where the partners have a previous history of maltreatment. Workshops on parenting skills and non-violent forms of disciplining children. Last, a policy response should also include better mechanisms for the victims to come forward and report the problem, support systems to help them escape from abusive domestic environments, and psychological service for trauma recovery.

Is there anything else you think we can learn about domestic violence in the United States from the recent NFL cases?

From the way the media covered it, it is clear that the general public is not well informed about intimate partner violence. More education will help de-stigmatize the issue.

Headline image credit: Grass. CC0 via Pixabay (<http://pixabay.com/en/abstract-backdrop-background-field-84622/>).

Greta Friedemann-Sánchez, (http://www.hhh.umn.edu/people/gfriedemann_sanchez/) PhD, is an Associate Professor of the Hubert H. Humphrey School of Public Affairs at the University of Minnesota.

Rodrigo Lovatón


(<http://www.apec.umn.edu/people/GraduateStudentDirectory/LovatonDavilaRodrigo/index.htm>), is a PhD Candidate of the Department of Applied Economics at the University of Minnesota. They are the authors of *"Intimate Partner Violence in Colombia: Who Is at Risk?"* (<http://oxford.ly/1Ep6YTs>) (available to read for free for a limited time) published in *Social Forces* (<http://oxford.ly/1nbLrbg>).

Arne Kalleberg (<http://www.unc.edu/~arnekal/>) is the Kenan Distinguished Professor of Sociology at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and editor of *Social Forces* (<http://www.oxfordjournals.org/page/5766/2>).

Subscribe to the OUPblog via email:

Or subscribe to articles in the subject area by [email \(http://blog.oup.com/subscribe-oupblog-via-email/\)](http://blog.oup.com/subscribe-oupblog-via-email/) or [RSS \(http://blog.oup.com/follow/\)](http://blog.oup.com/follow/)

What to read next

<p><u>Rethinking domestic violence: learning to see past the stereotypes</u> (http://blog.oup.com/2014/05/domestic-violence-myths-realities/)</p> <p>MAY 12TH 2014</p>	<p><u>The significance of gender representation in domestic violence units</u> (http://blog.oup.com/2014/07/female-representation-domestic-violence-units/)</p> <p>JULY 6TH 2014</p>	 <p><u>Beyond #WhyIStayed and #WhyILeft</u> (http://blog.oup.com/2014/09/beyond-whyi-stayed-and-whyi-left/)</p> <p>SEPTEMBER 16TH 2014</p>
---	---	--

Read More in...

[JOURNALS](#)

[SOCIAL SCIENCES](#)

[SOCIOLOGY](#)

Recent Comments

linda barry 10TH OCTOBER 2014

While not invalidating violence against women and/or children, I am becoming more aware of the attitude (or lack thereof) , of situations that men can find themselves trapped in with no help or escape. This article is prime example.

I have tried advocating for help for a distant friend of mine in a pretty tough DV situation, but amazingly the response from even my own friends is nil. If I was advocating for a homeless puppy, or a teenager who needs new Nikes I can only wonder the response. But I feel since my friend is a male it is indicative of the attitudes about DV. See my post here – <http://www.gofundme.com/fjsbmg> (<http://www.gofundme.com/fjsbmg>)

Leave a Comment

Your email address will not be published. Required fields are marked *

NAME *

EMAIL *

WEBSITE

COMMENT

POST COMMENT

- [About Us \(http://blog.oup.com/about/\)](http://blog.oup.com/about/)
- [Follow Us \(http://blog.oup.com/follow/\)](http://blog.oup.com/follow/)
- [Contact Us \(http://blog.oup.com/contact/\)](http://blog.oup.com/contact/)
- [Legal \(http://blog.oup.com/legal/\)](http://blog.oup.com/legal/)
- [Privacy Policy \(http://blog.oup.com/legal/privacy_policy/\)](http://blog.oup.com/legal/privacy_policy/)
- [Terms and Conditions of Use \(http://blog.oup.com/legal/terms_and_condi/\)](http://blog.oup.com/legal/terms_and_condi/)

Categories

- [Arts & Humanities \(http://blog.oup.com/category/arts_and_humanities/\)](http://blog.oup.com/category/arts_and_humanities/)
- [History \(http://blog.oup.com/category/history/\)](http://blog.oup.com/category/history/)
- [Language \(http://blog.oup.com/category/language-words/\)](http://blog.oup.com/category/language-words/)
- [Law \(http://blog.oup.com/category/law-legal/\)](http://blog.oup.com/category/law-legal/)
- [Science & Medicine \(http://blog.oup.com/category/science_medicine/\)](http://blog.oup.com/category/science_medicine/)
- [Social Sciences \(http://blog.oup.com/category/social_sciences/\)](http://blog.oup.com/category/social_sciences/)
- [Multimedia \(http://blog.oup.com/category/multimedia/\)](http://blog.oup.com/category/multimedia/)
- [Series & Columns \(http://blog.oup.com/category/series-columns/\)](http://blog.oup.com/category/series-columns/)

Social Media

- [Facebook \(https://www.facebook.com/OUPAcademic\)](https://www.facebook.com/OUPAcademic)
- [Twitter \(https://twitter.com/OUPAcademic\)](https://twitter.com/OUPAcademic)
- [Google Plus \(https://plus.google.com/+OUPAcademic/\)](https://plus.google.com/+OUPAcademic/)
- [Tumblr \(http://oupacademic.tumblr.com/\)](http://oupacademic.tumblr.com/)
- [Pinterest \(http://www.pinterest.com/oupacademic/\)](http://www.pinterest.com/oupacademic/)
- [YouTube \(https://www.youtube.com/OUPAcademic\)](https://www.youtube.com/OUPAcademic)
- [Vimeo \(http://vimeo.com/oupacademic\)](http://vimeo.com/oupacademic)
- [Soundcloud \(https://soundcloud.com/oupacademic\)](https://soundcloud.com/oupacademic)
- [Sina Weibo \(http://weibo.com/oupacademic\)](http://weibo.com/oupacademic)
- [OxfordWords blog \(http://blog.oxforddictionaries.com/\)](http://blog.oxforddictionaries.com/)

Gateways

- [OUP USA \(http://global.oup.com/academic/\)](http://global.oup.com/academic/)
- [OUP UK \(http://ukcatalogue.oup.com/\)](http://ukcatalogue.oup.com/)
- [Oxford Journals \(http://www.oxfordjournals.org/\)](http://www.oxfordjournals.org/)
- [Oxford Online \(http://global.oup.com/online/\)](http://global.oup.com/online/)
- [Higher Education \(http://global.oup.com/ushe/\)](http://global.oup.com/ushe/)
- [Oxford Index \(http://oxfordindex.oup.com/\)](http://oxfordindex.oup.com/)
- [Oxford Dictionaries \(http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/\)](http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/)
- [OUP Worldwide \(http://global.oup.com/\)](http://global.oup.com/)
- [University of Oxford \(http://www.ox.ac.uk/\)](http://www.ox.ac.uk/)

Oxford University Press is a department of the University of Oxford. It furthers the University's objective of excellence in research, scholarship, and education by publishing worldwide.

OXFORD
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Copyright © Oxford University Press 2014