

Ethnic Differences in Career Supports and Barriers for Battered Women: A Pilot Study

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Little empirical attention has been given to the career development needs of battered women. Using social cognitive career theory, the authors examined the relationships among abuse experiences, perceived career barriers, and contextual supports to the career-related self-efficacy and outcome expectations of 74 European American and ethnic minority battered women. The authors hypothesized that women of color would anticipate greater difficulty overcoming barriers, anticipate needing more future support, and have lower career-related self-efficacy and outcome expectations than European American women. Results showed no statistically significant ethnic group differences in participants' perceptions of difficulty overcoming barriers, anticipated future support needed, and career-related self-efficacy and outcome expectations. Results did show ethnic group differences in the relationships between contextual supports and career-related self-efficacy and outcome expectations. The authors discuss implications for research and practice.

Keywords: Battered women, career, vocational development, perceived career barriers, perceived career supports, self-efficacy

The impact of domestic violence on women's career development can be devastating (Bowen, 1982; Chronister & McWhirter, in press; Gianakos, 1999; Koss et al., 1994). The constant denigration associated with emotional abuse destroys women's beliefs in their competence and worth. Physical states and injuries resulting from physical and sexual abuse limit women's ability to go to work, complete job tasks, and advance in their job positions (Chronister & McWhirter, in press). Battered women also may be isolated and as a result, have fewer opportunities to engage in positive learning experiences, observe role models, and build support networks. These factors, considered from a social cognitive career theory (SCCT) perspective (Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 1994), severely restrict battered women's range of career interests, formulation of career goals, and persistence toward those goals.

Battered women of color often face a double jeopardy because they may encounter barriers related to both gender and race/ethnicity (Kanuha, 1994). Some battered women of color are more isolated because of language barriers,

distance from family members who live in other countries, and immigration status. Research suggests that battered women of color do not seek support services as often as European American battered women because of institutional racism, experiences of oppression, cultural beliefs, traditional gender role socialization, and racial loyalties (Greene & Jackson, 2000; Kanuha, 1994; Masaki & Wong, 1997). A lack of culturally appropriate services also contributes to the perception of limited options for battered women of color, and this perception is often a reality (Kanuha, 1994). Furthermore, battered lesbians of color face barriers such as heterosexism, homophobia, and a lack of understanding of lesbian domestic violence (Kanuha, 1994; Lobel, 1986; Peterman & Dixon, 2003).

Despite the multifaceted and serious consequences of domestic violence, there has been little empirical research on the relationship between domestic violence and women's career-related behavior and even less research examining the career development of battered women of color. For the purposes of this article, we define *career* to include all forms of paid and unpaid work and educational pursuits and attainments over an individual's lifetime (Sharf, 2002). A comprehensive review of four decades of research yielded only one empirical evaluation of a career program for battered women (C. Brown, 2001), three non-empirical articles that present guidelines for career counseling with battered women (Bowen, 1982; Gianakos, 1999; Ibrahim & Herr, 1987), and one empirical investigation of battered women's perceived career barriers and career decision-making self-efficacy (C. Brown, Reedy, Fountain, Johnson, & Dichiser, 2000).

In the present study, our aim was to examine ethnic differences in career-related variables salient for battered women. We examined abuse history, career-related barriers and supports, vocational skills self-efficacy, and career outcome expectations among a sample of battered women of color and European American women living in domestic violence shelters. In the following sections, we present the theoretical framework for this investigation and social cognitive career theory (Lent et al., 1994) and review relevant literature bearing on this topic.

SOCIAL COGNITIVE CAREER THEORY AND BATTERED WOMEN'S CAREER DEVELOPMENT

SCCT has been recognized as useful in understanding and responding to the career development concerns of oppressed groups (Chartrand & Rose, 1996; Hackett & Byars, 1996; Morrow, Gore, & Campbell, 1996), including battered women (Chronister & McWhirter, in press). SCCT is grounded in Bandura's (1986) social cognitive theory and identifies relationships among individual and contextual variables that influence career development processes, including formation of career interests, identification of career choices, and performance and persistence in career pursuits. Central mechanisms of SCCT are self-efficacy and outcome expectations, contextual barriers and supports, and personal goals.

According to SCCT, person variables (e.g., sex and ethnicity), background contextual affordances (e.g., supports for and barriers to engaging in certain activities), and learning experiences obtained in home, school, and work settings all combine to directly influence the development of self-efficacy and outcome expectations. These expectations in turn influence the development of interests and the translation of interests into goals and then behaviors.

Self-Efficacy and Outcome Expectations

Self-efficacy expectations, or confidence in one's ability to successfully perform specific behaviors, influence the likelihood that an individual will attempt and persist in the behaviors despite difficulties (Bandura, 1986). Self-efficacy expectations develop through (a) performance accomplishments (success and failure experiences), (b) vicarious experiences (observing role models), (c) verbal persuasion (encouragement and discouragement), and (d) physiological states (anxiety and excitement). A battered woman's learning experiences that influence her job search self-efficacy (e.g., constant verbal criticism of her self-presentation and her abilities) may decrease the likelihood that she will actually seek a job.

Outcome expectations refer to personal beliefs about the consequences of performing particular behaviors (Lent et al., 2000). Empirical research on career-related self-efficacy and outcome expectations has consistently found a strong positive association between the two (Gainor & Lent, 1998; Lopez, Lent, Brown, & Gore, 1997; Smith & Fouad, 1999). When self-efficacy expectations are low, outcome expectations are more likely to be low. For example, the battered woman whose abuser has repeatedly told her that she will never get a job may also believe that even if she does actually get a job the outcome will be that the abuser harasses her in the workplace, damages her reputation and work performance, and she will be fired.

Contextual Barriers and Supports

Contextual supports and barriers are believed to influence the translation of interests into goals and goals to behaviors (Lent et al., 1994, 2000). For example, a woman with high self-efficacy and outcome expectations associated with pursuing a career in teaching will be more likely to establish the goal of becoming a teacher and to enroll in education coursework if she perceives fewer barriers to pursuing an education degree and experiences environmental support for pursuing her goals. Barriers associated with domestic violence include systematic isolation from support networks and denial of financial, physical (e.g. child care assistance), and other resources. Other barriers include physical injuries, emotional trauma, and lack of freedom to make and keep appointments and commitments. Underscoring the relationship between contextual

supports and barriers and learning experiences, Sullivan (1991) found that the following three factors influence battered women's decision to seek outside help: severity of abuse, the number of resources a woman possesses, and a woman's belief that such efforts will be successful.

In the present study, we explored the relationships among contextual supports and barriers and career-related self-efficacy and outcome expectations, consistent with recommendations made by Lent et al. (2000) that future research (a) assess barriers in relation to specific developmental tasks and choice options rather than as global, trait-like beliefs; (b) consider the relationship of barriers to other conceptually relevant variables (in this study, career-related self-efficacy and outcome expectations); and (c) complement the study of barriers with that of positive environmental conditions or supports. Our goal was to examine and compare relationships among ethnic minority and European American battered women's abuse history (as a type of learning experience), perceived barriers and supports (as proximal influences), and career-related self-efficacy and outcome expectations. We examined self-efficacy expectations associated with specific vocational skills and outcome expectations associated with future career satisfaction and success.

Our hypotheses were the following.

Hypothesis 1: Women of color will anticipate greater difficulty overcoming future barriers, will anticipate needing more future support, and will have lower career self-efficacy and outcome expectations than European American women.

Hypothesis 2: Abuse history will be positively related to perceived barriers and negatively related to supports, self-efficacy expectations, and outcome expectations for both groups.

Hypothesis 3: There will be significant positive relationships between supports and self-efficacy, supports and outcome expectations, and a significant inverse relationship between barriers and self-efficacy and barriers and outcome expectations for both groups.

The first hypothesis is derived from the literature bearing on the additional barriers faced by battered women of color (Kanuha, 1994) and members of oppressed groups (C. Brown et al., 2000; Chartrand & Rose, 1996; Morrow et al., 1996). The last two hypotheses are consistent with SCCT, which identifies a direct relationship between learning experiences (abuse history) and self-efficacy and learning experiences and outcome expectations (Lent et al., 1994). As described previously, we also anticipated that contextual supports would be significantly related to learning experiences and self-efficacy and outcome expectations based on domestic violence and career development research purporting that individuals' knowledge of contextual supports and expectations for the usefulness of such supports may significantly influence their choice to use available

resources, perceptions of barriers, and coping efficacy (S. D. Brown & Krane, 2000; Lent et al., 2000; Sullivan & Bybee, 1999). Also consistent with SCCT and research on career barriers (Lent et al., 2000; McWhirter, 1997; Swanson & Woitke, 1997), we anticipated that women's perceptions of barriers would be significantly related to their learning experiences (abuse history) and self-efficacy and outcome expectations.

METHOD

Participants

Participants were 74 adult women residing in domestic violence shelters in four West Coast and Pacific Northwest states. The 43 participants who identified as European American ranged in age from 20 to 52 ($M = 37$, $SD = 9.1$), and 78% ($n = 34$) had at least one child living with them in the shelter. They reported their highest level of education as follows: grade school, 2% ($n = 1$); some high school, 19% ($n = 8$); completed high school, 28% ($n = 12$); some college, no degree, 37% ($n = 16$); and associate's or bachelor's degrees, 14% ($n = 6$). Prior to entering the shelter, 14% ($n = 6$) were not employed; 23% ($n = 10$) were employed in unskilled and semiskilled work; 2% ($n = 1$) in skilled manual work; 21% ($n = 9$) in clerical, sales, and semiprofessional work; 2% ($n = 1$) in minor professional work; and 37% ($n = 16$) of European American participants did not report their occupational history.

The 31 participants who identified as Latina ($n = 8$), African American ($n = 6$), Native American ($n = 5$), biracial ($n = 8$), or multiracial ($n = 4$) ranged in age from 22 to 44 ($M = 31.6$, $SD = 6.7$) years, and 86% ($n = 27$) had at least one child living with them in the shelter. They reported their highest level of education as follows: some grade school, 7% ($n = 2$); finished grade school, 2% ($n = 1$); some high school, 19% ($n = 6$); finished high school, 36% ($n = 11$); some college, no degree, 16% ($n = 5$); and associate's or bachelor's degree, 20% ($n = 6$). Prior to entering the shelter, 42% ($n = 13$) of participants of color were not employed; 17% ($n = 5$) were employed in unskilled and semiskilled work; 7% ($n = 2$) in skilled manual work; 13% ($n = 4$) in clerical, sales, and semiprofessional work; 3% ($n = 1$) in administrative work; and 19% ($n = 6$) did not provide their occupational history.

Procedure

The lead author telephoned 97 domestic violence shelter directors in four West Coast and Pacific Northwest states to provide them with information about

the present study. Of these shelter directors, 40 agreed to participate by distributing research packets to shelter residents who voluntarily completed all assessment instruments during their stay in the shelters. A total of 25 directors returned 79 packets, of which 74 contained complete and useable data. Each research packet included 10 measures, 8 of which were used in the present study. The 2 excluded measures were part of a separate and ongoing validity study.

Instruments

Noting the importance of domain-specific measures in SCCT research (Lopez et al., 1997; Smith & Fouad, 1999), we created or adapted with permission a number of measures used in the present study. To date, there are few career measures that are appropriate to use with adult, nonstudent populations and none that address the unique contextual barriers and supports representative of battered women's experiences.

Demographic questions. Participants self-reported their ethnicity, employment status (employed, not employed), income sources, number of children living in their household, and the duration (in months and years) of their most recent abusive intimate relationship.

Socioeconomic status. The Hollingshead's four-factor index of social status (Hollingshead, 1975) was used to assess socioeconomic status. Scores are derived from respondent sex, marital status, education, and occupation. Scores range from 0 to 66.

Abuse experiences checklist. This 42-item measure assesses women's experiences of nonphysical, physical, and sexual abuse from an intimate partner. This measure was selected from a variety of abuse checklists commonly used by domestic violence shelters, and no authorship information was available. This measure lists 12 physical, 4 sexual, and 26 emotional or nonphysical abuse tactics, for example, "punch," "emotionally or physically forces you into certain sex acts," and "criticizes you." Participants indicated their experiences of abuse by placing a checkmark next to each tactic that they experienced in their most recent abusive intimate relationship. We provided space under each abuse category for participants to write in additional tactics they experienced with an intimate partner but that were not listed on this measure. The first author and a graduate assistant independently categorized the write-in abuse tactics ($n = 42$) as nonphysical, physical, or sexual, with 100% consensus. A total score for abuse experiences was calculated by summing the number of tactics endorsed with a checkmark and the categorized abuse tactics experienced. Scores may range from 0 to 55, with higher scores indicating more abuse tactics experienced. Tactics were not weighted for severity.

Vocational skills self-efficacy (VSSE). We assessed confidence in performing a variety of vocational skills using a subset of 25 items from McWhirter's 36-item vocational skills self-efficacy measure (see McWhirter, Rasheed, & Crothers, 1998). We dropped 11 items from the VSSE because they were more appropriate for high school students. All items begin with the phrase, "How confident are you in your ability to...." Sample items include, "Find information about occupations that you are interested in," "Make a plan of your goals for the next 5 years," and "Change occupations if you are not satisfied with the one you enter." Respondents indicated their degree of confidence on a 10-point scale ranging from 0 (*very little*) to 9 (*very much*). An overall score for vocational skills self-efficacy was calculated by summing all items. Scores may range from 0 to 225, with higher scores indicating higher vocational skills self-efficacy. Internal consistency for the present sample was $\alpha = .99$. An estimate of concurrent validity ($r = .92$; $p < .01$) was obtained using the Career Search Self-Efficacy Scale (CSES) (Solberg, Good, & Nord, 1994), a 35-item measure with adequate reliability and validity that assesses an individual's degree of confidence in performing a variety of career-search tasks.

Career outcome expectations (COE). This 30-item measure was constructed for the purpose of this study and assesses expectations for future career success. Items for this measure were generated from a review of existing outcome expectations measures and literature on battered women. A sociologist with expertise in gender violence, domestic violence shelter staff, and private community therapists reviewed and critiqued the items. Sample items include, "My career planning will lead to a satisfying career," "My talents and skills will be used in my occupation," and "I have control over my career decisions." Respondents indicate their degree of agreement on a 6-point scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 6 (*strongly agree*). An overall score was calculated by summing all items. Scores may range from 30 to 180, with higher scores indicating higher outcome expectations for future career satisfaction and success. In the present study, the COE measure showed adequate internal consistency reliability ($\alpha = .91$). The Hope Scale (Snyder et al., 1991), a 12-item self-report measure with adequate reliability and validity and designed to assess levels of hopefulness, was used as an indicator of convergent validity for the COE measure ($r = .47$; $p < .01$).

Perceived career support (PCS). This 117-item measure was developed for the purpose of this study and assesses an individual's degree of perceived support for pursuing and achieving career goals. Items for this measure were generated from a review of existing support measures and literature on battered women. Items were reviewed by a sociologist with expertise in gender violence, domestic violence shelter staff, and private community therapists. This measure is composed of three subscales, magnitude of past support (Past Support subscale), future support anticipated (Future Support subscale), and future support needed to achieve career goals (Goal Efficacy Support subscale). Each subscale is comprised of 39 items measuring the following three types of support: financial, emotional, and

informational/advice. Item stems are, "How much of this type of support have you received in the past?" (Past Support subscale), "How likely is it that you will receive this support in the future?" (Future Support subscale), and "If you do not receive this support in the future, how difficult do you think it will be for you to achieve your occupational, career, or educational goals?" (Goal Efficacy Support subscale). Sample items include, "financial assistance from federal, state, or local governments;" "emotional support from family members;" and "information/advice from domestic violence agencies." Response options range from 1 (*not at all*) to 4 (*a great deal*) for the Past Support subscale, 1 (*definitely not*) to 4 (*definitely will*) for the Future Support subscale, and 1 (*not at all difficult*) to 4 (*extremely difficult*) for the Goal Efficacy Support subscale. Subscale scores were calculated by summing all items for each subscale. Scores may range from 39 to 156, with higher scores on the Past Support, Future Support, and Goal Efficacy Support subscales indicating greater support received in the past, future support anticipated, and future support needed, respectively. Only subscale scores were of interest.

Internal consistency reliabilities (?) for the subscales were .94, .94, and .96 for the Past Support, Future Support, and Goal Efficacy Support subscales, respectively. Evidence of convergent validity for all three subscales was obtained using three validity items. The first validity item, "In the past, I would describe the past support that I have received as..." with response options ranging from 1 (*very low*) to 5 (*very high*), was significantly correlated with the Past Support subscale ($r = .32; p < .05$). The second validity item, "In general, I believe that future support I receive in these areas will be..." with response options ranging from 1 (*very low*) to 5 (*very high*), was significantly correlated with the Future Support subscale ($r = .50; p < .01$). The third validity item, "In general, how difficult do you believe it will be to achieve your occupational, career, or educational goals without these types of support?," with response options ranging from 1 (*not at all difficult*) to 4 (*extremely difficult*), was significantly correlated with the Goal Efficacy Support subscale ($r = .59; p < .01$). Subscale correlations were as follows: past support and future support ($r = .67; p < .01$), past support and goal efficacy support ($r = .36; p < .01$), and future support and goal efficacy support ($r = .45; p < .01$).

Perceived career barriers (PCB). This 150-item measure assesses an individual's perceived barriers to pursuing and achieving career goals. This measure is comprised of three subscales: magnitude of past barriers (Past Barriers subscale), likelihood of encountering future barriers (Future Barriers subscale), and difficulty overcoming future barriers (Barrier Difficulty subscale). Each subscale is made up of 50 items. The first 28 barrier items of each subscale are from McWhirter's (1997) perceptions of educational barriers measure. The remaining 22 items are original and represent barriers specific to the experiences of battered women. Item stems are, "How big of a barrier was this for you in the past?" (Past Barriers subscale), "How likely is it that this will be a barrier for you in the future?"

(Future Barriers subscale), and “If you encounter this barrier in the future, how difficult do you think it will be to overcome it?” (Barrier Difficulty subscale). Sample barrier items include, “harassment at work or school by partner,” “too much of my time spent with social service agencies,” and “personal injury and abuse from partner.” Response options range from 1 (*not a barrier*) to 4 (*huge barrier*) for the Past Barriers subscale, 1 (*not at all likely*) to 4 (*definitely will*) for the Future Barriers subscale, and 1 (*not at all difficult*) to 4 (*extremely difficult*) for the Barrier Difficulty subscale. Subscale scores were calculated by summing all the items for each subscale. Scores may range from 50 to 200, with higher scores on the Past Barriers, Future Barriers, and Barrier Difficulty subscales indicating greater magnitude of past barriers, likelihood of encountering future barriers, and difficulty overcoming future barriers, respectively. Only subscale scores were of interest. Cronbach’s alphas for the barriers subscales were .94, .95, and .96 for the Past Barriers, Future Barriers, and Barrier Difficulty subscales, respectively. Two validity items were included at the end of the barriers measure to provide estimates of convergent validity. These items were, “There are many barriers that will make it difficult for me to achieve my career goals” and “I will be able to overcome any barriers that stand in the way of achieving my career and occupational goals.” Response options range from 1 (*not at all*) to 4 (*definitely*). The subscales were correlated ($p < .01$) with the first validity item with r s of .46 (Past Barriers subscale), .61 (Future Barriers subscale), and .53 (Barrier Difficulty subscale). The second validity item was not correlated with barriers subscales but was negatively correlated with the vocational skills self-efficacy ($r = -.43$; $p < .01$) and career outcome expectations ($r = -.35$; $p < .01$) measures. In the present study, there were significant correlations between past barriers and future barriers ($r = .65$; $p < .01$), past barriers and barrier difficulty ($r = .47$; $p < .01$), and future barriers and barrier difficulty ($r = .91$; $p < .01$). This suggests that respondents did not distinguish between the likelihood of encountering future barriers from the difficulty of overcoming them. Subscale correlations with other study variables are discussed in the next section.

RESULTS

Descriptive Data

For European American participants, the duration of their most recent abusive intimate relationship ranged from 8 months to 31 years ($M = 6.57$, $SD = 7.69$), with 98% ($n = 42$) reporting both emotional and physical abuse and 70% ($n = 30$) reporting experiences of sexual abuse in that relationship. Time in the relationship for participants of color ranged from 2 months to 21 years ($M = 6.76$, $SD = 5.70$), with 94% ($n = 29$) reporting both emotional and physical abuse and 58% ($n = 18$) reporting sexual abuse. There were no ethnic group differences in socioeconomic status, $t(72) = .31$, $p = .16$, or time in their most recent abusive

relationship, $t(57.40) = .88, p = .38$. Means and standard deviations for the study variables are reported in Table 1.

Hypothesis 1

Our first hypothesis was that women of color would anticipate greater difficulty overcoming future barriers, need more future support, and have lower vocational skills self-efficacy and outcome expectations than European American participants. We conducted a one-way multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) with ethnic group membership (European American or woman of color) as the independent variable and vocational skills self-efficacy, career outcome expectations, perceived future support needed for goal achievement (GOALSUP), and perceived difficulty overcoming future barriers (DIFBAR) as the dependent variables. Only a single subscale was included for the barriers and support variables, respectively, due to concerns about multicollinearity and the small sample size. Contrary to our hypothesis, there was no multivariate effect: Wilks' $\lambda = .98, F(4, 60) = .37, p = .83; \eta = .02$.

Hypotheses 2 and 3

A zero-order correlation matrix of the study variables for European American participants and participants of color, respectively, were generated (see Table 1). For these analyses, the correlation coefficient serves as the effect size indicator. We expected to find that abuse history would be significantly and positively related to perceptions of barriers for both participant groups. For European American participants, abuse history was significantly and positively related to perceptions of past barriers ($r = .58; p < .01$) and future barriers ($r = .37; p < .05$) but not related to anticipated difficulty overcoming future barriers ($r = .29$). For women of color, abuse history was not significantly related to their perceptions of past barriers ($r = .22$), future barriers ($r = .08$), or anticipated difficulty overcoming future barriers ($r = .09$). The socioeconomic status of women of color however was significantly and positively related to abuse history ($r = .42; p = .05$) and negatively related to perceptions of future barriers ($r = -.56; p = .01$) and anticipated difficulty overcoming future barriers ($r = -.54; p = .01$). Socioeconomic status was not significantly related to abuse history or any other variable for European American women. Finally, abuse history was not significantly related to participants' VSSE and COE as we had hypothesized.

Our third hypothesis, that there would be significant positive relationships between self-efficacy and supports and outcome expectations and supports, was partially supported. For European American participants, VSSE was not significantly related to any of the support subscales. VSSE for participants of color was not significantly related to past career support ($r = .37$) and future career support ($r = .23$) but were significantly and negatively related to goal efficacy support (r

Table 1
Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations Among Main Study Variables for European American and Women of Color

Variable	M ¹	SD ¹	M ²	SD ²	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1 TIME	5.74	7.89	4.41	4.21	—	-.15	-.08	-.22	.15	.32	.16	.12	.11	.43*	.42*
2 SES	20.81	21.53	19.39	16.58	-.06	—	.42*	.10	.09	-.28	-.56**	-.54**	-.02	-.04	-.19
3 ABUSE	27.12	8.48	28.44	9.04	.11	-.02	—	-.05	-.05	.22	.08	.09	.20	.21	.13
4 VSSE	160.49	72.86	176.60	77.05	.26	-.05	-.08	—	.58**	-.19	-.45**	-.44*	.37	.23	-.46*
5 COE	148.79	18.65	153.93	16.85	.05	.03	-.02	.58**	—	-.23	-.34	-.44*	.22	.15	-.38*
6 PSTBAR	121.14	29.47	124.90	30.50	.08	-.01	.58**	-.23	-.22	—	.61**	.49**	.30	.35	.37*
7 FUTBAR	94.27	24.18	97.04	30.15	.01	-.09	.37*	-.33*	-.29	.68**	—	.93**	.19	.19	.58**
8 DIFBAR	91.61	26.05	92.91	31.90	-.04	-.11	.29	-.16	-.23	.45**	.88**	—	.14	.17	.63**
9 PSTSUP	79.80	22.84	83.86	25.77	-.03	-.12	.31	.26	.09	.26	.07	.06	—	.78**	.12
10 FUTSUP	89.04	27.36	96.95	23.51	.05	.19	.21	.26	.28	.32	-.03	-.09	.60**	—	.40*
11 GOALSUP	83.87	28.14	87.93	27.84	.03	.08	.32	-.03	.14	.37*	.23	.23	.55**	.48**	—

Note. Correlations for women of color are above the diagonal. M¹ and SD¹ = means and standard deviations for European American women; M² and SD² = means and standard deviations for women of color. Variable names and scale ranges: TIME = number of years in most recent abusive relationship; SES = socioeconomic status; ABUSE = total number of abuse tactics experienced (0 to 55); VSSE = vocational skills self-efficacy (0 to 225); COE = career outcome expectations (30 to 180); PSTBAR = perceived career barriers, past (50 to 200); FUTBAR = perceived career barriers, future (50 to 200); DIFBAR = difficulty overcoming future career barriers (50 to 200); PSTSUP = perceived career support, past (39 to 156); FUTSUP = perceived career support, future (39 to 156); GOALSUP = goal efficacy without future support (39 to 156).

* $p < .05$, one-tailed. ** $p < .01$, one-tailed.

= $-.46$). That is, women of color reporting more confidence in their vocational abilities also anticipated needing less future support to achieve their career goals. Similar to the results for self-efficacy, European American participants' COE were not significantly related to any of the support subscales, but the COE of women of color were significantly and negatively correlated with goal efficacy support ($r = -.38; p < .05$).

We also hypothesized that there would be significant inverse relationships between self-efficacy and perceived barriers and outcome expectations and perceived barriers. Consistent with prior research, VSSE was positively correlated with COE for both European American participants ($r = .58; p < .01$) and participants of color ($r = .58; p < .01$). VSSE was significantly and inversely correlated with participants' perceptions of career barriers. Specifically, for European American participants, higher VSSE was associated with anticipation of encountering fewer future barriers ($r = -.33; p < .05$). For participants of color, VSSE was significantly and inversely related to the Future Barriers ($r = -.45; p < .01$) and Barrier Difficulty ($r = -.44; p < .05$) subscales. COE were not significantly related to any of the barrier subscales for European American participants but were associated with lower anticipated difficulty overcoming future barriers ($r = -.44; p < .05$) for participants of color.

Finally, we examined the relationship between perceived career supports and barriers. For European American participants, only past career barriers were significantly related to goal efficacy support ($r = .37; p < .05$). For women of color, goal efficacy support was significantly and positively correlated with past career barriers ($r = .37; p < .05$), future career barriers ($r = .58; p < .01$), and barrier difficulty ($r = .63; p < .01$).

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to examine ethnic differences in and compare relationships between specific career-related variables among battered women residing in domestic violence shelters. The results of the MANOVA suggest that there were no ethnic group differences in mean scores on any dependent variables. It may be that combining women of color into a single group obscured some actual ethnic differences, but the sample size precludes more specific testing of this hypothesis. Perhaps the common experience of domestic violence and the fact that participants were in similar stages of crisis (residing in shelters) is a more important influence on levels of these social cognitive variables than the differential learning experiences associated with ethnic group membership. We consider this an important topic for further investigation.

Examination of correlation coefficients suggests that the relationships among the dependent variables are very different for battered women of color and European American battered women. That is, data seem to indicate that there are qualitative differences as opposed to quantitative differences among ethnic

minority and European American women's career self-efficacy and outcome expectations and perceptions of career barriers and supports. We examine these relationships in the following sections.

Abuse History

Consistent with our hypotheses, European American women who experienced a greater number of abuse tactics reported more past barriers and expected more in the future than those European American participants who experienced fewer tactics. For women of color, abuse history was not significantly related to past or anticipated future barriers. It may be that European American women's experiences of oppression and barriers are associated primarily with their experiences of domestic violence. Abuse history may account for a smaller portion of variance in barriers for women of color because the barriers they experience, though perhaps of the same overall magnitude as those of the European American participants, include more barriers outside of those associated specifically with domestic violence, such as racism and a lack of culturally sensitive services. C. Brown et al.'s (2000) finding that racial discrimination is a more significant barrier for battered women of color supports this hypothesis.

For women of color, abuse history also was positively related to socioeconomic status. That is, women of color from higher socioeconomic backgrounds reported experiencing more abuse tactics than women of color from lower socioeconomic backgrounds. There was no significant relationship between socioeconomic status and abuse history for European American women. Results may suggest that employment for women of color may have increased their risk for abuse because their employment defied traditional gender roles and they earned money that could have significantly increased their independence and chances for leaving the abusive situation. As a result, abusive partners may have used more abusive tactics to keep women trapped in the abusive situation.

Abuse history was not significantly related to vocational skills self-efficacy or outcome expectations for either group. It is possible that limiting abuse experiences to the women's most recent abuse influenced these results. That is, there may be a great deal of variation associated with abuse experienced prior to the most recent relationship that is not accounted for here. The present study data do not permit exploration of this question.

Contextual Supports

Perceived past and future career supports were not significantly related to participants' vocational skills self-efficacy expectations. This finding is inconsistent with SCCT, which purports that background contextual affordances and learning experiences, such as positive verbal persuasion, role model exposure, and community resources, serve to increase and maintain vocational self-efficacy

(Lent et al., 1994, 2000). For women of color only, future support needed was inversely related to their vocational self-efficacy. This was not true for European American participants. Also, as perceptions of past and future barriers and difficulty overcoming future barriers increased for women of color, perceptions of future support needed also increased.

Given the significant relationships among future support needed, vocational self-efficacy and outcome expectations, and barriers among women of color, participants' perceptions of future support needed may be critical. Women of color often belong to ethnic groups that are more collectivist and emphasize the utilization of family and ethnic culture community support. Data from the present study also suggest that the longer women of color in this sample experience domestic violence in their most recent relationship, the higher their perceptions of future support ($r = .43$; $p < .05$) and future support needed ($r = .42$; $p < .05$) to achieve their career goals. This is not true for European American women. Considering these results together, it may be that women of color perceive a greater loss of family and community support as well as greater isolation the longer they are involved in a violent relationship prior to leaving. Also, women of color may perceive needing more future support because they are more likely to seek help for their abusive partners and consider support options that do not involve leaving their partners permanently (Kanuha, 1994; Masaki & Wong, 1997). Consequently, there may be a stronger relationship between the need for future support and confidence in vocational skills and hopefulness about their future career endeavors for women of color.

Perceived future support needed for women of color was also positively related to all barriers subscales. This relationship seems intuitive and suggests that as women of color experience more past barriers and anticipate more future barriers and difficulty overcoming future barriers, they anticipate that they will need more support in the future. This was not true for European American women in this sample, perhaps because they use more individualistic, versus collectivist, methods of survival (Kanuha, 1994; Masaki & Wong, 1997).

Contextual Barriers

Socioeconomic status was significantly and negatively related to perceptions of future barriers and anticipated difficulty overcoming future barriers for women of color. These findings support our conjecture that women of color may perceive more barriers outside of their experiences of domestic violence than do European American women. Moreover, race and access to economic resources are interrelated such that women of color may perceive more future barriers and anticipate greater difficulty overcoming future barriers to economic stability and independence than do European American women. In particular, immigrant women of color may perceive more economic barriers after they have left an abusive relationship because of greater geographic isolation from family and friends and difficulty securing employment or government assistance because of lan-

guage barriers or immigration status. To further investigate our hypothesis, we conducted a post hoc independent samples *t* test to identify any ethnic group differences in the number of other income sources (e.g., family members or government assistance) that women reported. Results of the *t* test, $t(68) = 1.29, p = .02$, showed significant ethnic group differences in the number of income sources that participants reported. Specifically, women of color reported fewer income sources than did European American participants. These results suggest that women of color had fewer or no additional income sources upon entering the shelter, other than their jobs if employed. These results support our interpretation that women of color and immigrant women of color in particular may have access to fewer income sources after leaving an abusive relationship and perceive a lack of financial resources as a significant future barrier that will be difficult to overcome. Further research regarding the relationships among socioeconomic status, race/ethnicity, immigration history, and battered women's perceived career barriers is critical.

Women of color who perceived more future barriers and anticipated more difficulty overcoming future barriers had lower vocational skills self-efficacy and lower career outcome expectations. For European American participants, higher anticipated future barriers was associated with lower vocational skills self-efficacy. Research findings regarding the role of contextual barriers in SCCT and the career development process have been mixed (Lent et al., 2000). Past research findings indicate a weak to modest influence of contextual barriers on different career development variables (Luzzo, 1996; McWhirter, Hackett, & Bandalos, 1998; Swanson & Tokar, 1991). More recently however, the relationship between perceived barriers and career and educational outcome variables has received additional support (Chen, Blumberg, & Austin, 2001; Flores & DeWitz, 2001; Kenny, Gallagher, Grossman, & Chaves, 2001; Rasheed, 2001). The present study findings are inconsistent with those of C. Brown et al. (2000), the only published research examining the relationship between battered women's perceived career barriers and career decision-making self-efficacy. C. Brown et al. did not find a significant relationship between battered women's career decision-making self-efficacy and perceived career barriers.

To our surprise, women's vocational skills self-efficacy was not significantly related to participants' perceptions of past career barriers. We anticipated that both past barriers and experiences of abuse, as learning experiences, would have significant influences on self-efficacy and outcome expectations for all participants. It may be that assessing past experiences retrospectively (rather than longitudinally) does not accurately capture the relationship between past experiences and current self-efficacy expectations.

There was a significant and inverse relationship between difficulty overcoming future barriers and outcome expectations for women of color but not for European American women. Morrow et al. (1996) and Chartrand and Rose (1996) suggested that under conditions of oppression or discrimination, outcome expectations may be lower and have a greater influence on interests than self-effi-

cacy beliefs. That is, barriers related to oppression and discrimination may lower women's expectations for future career success. For all participants, we anticipated that women's career outcome expectations would be negatively related to oppression related to their experiences of domestic violence. Perhaps battered women's experiences of oppression in abusive intimate relationships differ from experiences of oppression based on race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, or incarceration such that European American participants' career-related outcome expectations differ as well. Women may view the oppression of living in a domestic violence situation as something they can change or escape more so than women experiencing oppression associated with race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, or imprisonment. Given that all of the correlation coefficients between barriers and outcome expectations were above .21, it is also possible that significant correlations would have been obtained with a larger sample. Further research on the nature of battered women's career outcome expectations across settings (living with abuser, shelter, and living apart from abuser and outside of shelter), over time, and using a larger sample will help to clarify the meaning of these findings.

We conducted an additional and previously unplanned analysis to further explore the data. First, we divided participants into groups based on the length of time that they were in their most recent intimate abusive relationship. The two groups included women who were in their most recent abusive relationship for (a) less than 3 years ($n = 37$) and (b) more than 3 years ($n = 28$). Then, we conducted a MANOVA to identify differences on the dependent variables (vocational skills self-efficacy, outcome expectations, perceived difficulty overcoming future barriers, and anticipated future support needed), with length of time in abusive relationship and ethnic group membership as the independent variables. There was no significant interaction between length of time in abusive relationship and ethnic group membership, $F(4, 58) = .53, p = .72$; and there were no main effects for length of time in abusive relationship, $F(4, 58) = .77, p = .55$, and ethnic group membership, $F(4, 58) = .88, p = .30$.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

Currently, many domestic violence programs and support groups for battered women focus on increasing women's awareness of the negative impact of domestic violence and the multiple barriers that such violence has presented in their lives. This focus on barriers alone without also on building support may create a victim identity as opposed to a survivor identity for many battered women. Moreover, there is a significant lack of culturally sensitive intervention programs for battered women of color and culturally sensitive training experiences for researchers and clinicians working with battered women of color (Kanuha, 1994). This pilot study raises more questions than it answers, and obviously more information is needed. Nonetheless, results from this study suggest that the relationships among career variables may be very different for women of color and

European American women surviving domestic violence. Contextual supports influence the likelihood that people will attempt and persist in career-related behaviors, and the findings of this study suggest that greater contextual supports for women of color are associated with higher vocational skills self-efficacy and outcome expectations. Clearly more research with this population is needed; even so, we suggest that attention to the identification and building of support networks be incorporated into shelter interventions.

RESEARCH LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

There are several limitations of the present pilot study that must be considered in interpretation of the findings. First, the results are based on a small sample size. The difficulties of gathering survey data from women residing in shelters are considerable, and clearly there were many women in the participating shelters who did not agree to complete the surveys. Thus, the sample cannot be considered representative of all women in domestic violence shelters. Second, because of our small sample size, the data from four different ethnic groups were combined in the analyses. The experiences of Latinas, African American, Native American, and Asian/Pacific Island women are not all the same, and future research examining these ethnic groups separately is imperative. Third, several of the measures are original. The inclusion of reliability and validity estimates adds confidence in the results, however some inconsistencies in the validity data suggest that replication of the study with a larger sample is warranted. In addition, we recommend examination of these constructs with battered women across contexts (i.e., shelters, community, advocacy centers, and transitional housing locations), in different stages of domestic violence survival (i.e., currently in an abusive relationship, leaving an abusive relationship, and permanently left an abusive relationship), and over time.

CONCLUSION

The primary purpose of this study was to examine relationships among a series of social cognitive constructs among European American women and women of color residing in domestic violence shelters. This research builds on previous social cognitive career theory research by examining a population that is both understudied and in critical need of vocational assistance. This research is the first to empirically examine potential ethnic differences in relationships among critical social cognitive career variables. Continued efforts to understand and respond to the career development needs of battered women will enhance the effectiveness of efforts to end the oppression of violence and promote their optimal career development and well-being.

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