



Comparative Criminology: **CHILD ABUSE**

Some Exploratory Studies on Child Abuse in Other Countries

Unfortunately, there is no systematic global data collection regarding child abuse; however, the World Health Organization (WHO, 2002) estimated that there were about 57,000 homicides of children under 15 in just the year 2000. This study also found that perpetrators of child abuse had witnessed violence against their mothers when they were young. This is consistent with studies that repeatedly find links between childhood exposure to domestic violence and violent offending at older ages (see discussion in Van Dijk, 2008, p. 88). This phenomenon is commonly referred to as the “cycle of violence.”

Van Dijk (2008) points out that perhaps the most comprehensive studies of child abuse in modern times were done in Germany, surveying more than 11,000 teenagers about their experiences with domestic violence. One consistent finding was that children of immigrants reported significantly higher rates/percentages of violence against mothers, with extremely high rates among those from Turkey (32%), Yugoslavia (25%), and Russia (20%). Another interesting pattern was that the immigrant families that had resided in Germany for longer periods had higher rates of domestic violence, which Van Dijk claimed suggested “growing tensions between spouses after a longer exposure of

women to German norms and values concerning gender equality” (p. 88).

Also notable, WHO (2004) estimated that annual economic costs in the United States due to child abuse totaled about \$94 billion. And although traditionally rare, there is a growing trend to punish much more severely parents and caretakers who abuse children, which also adds to the costs in terms of processing and incarcerating offenders. For example, in October 2012, a 23-year-old Texas woman was sentenced to 99 years in prison for such abuses as gluing her daughter’s hands to the wall and beating her as punishment for potty-training setbacks. (Read more about this story here: [http:// abcnews.go.com/US/texas-mom-glued-daughtershands-wall-99-years/story?id=17436643](http://abcnews.go.com/US/texas-mom-glued-daughtershands-wall-99-years/story?id=17436643).)

THINK ABOUT IT:

1. In the 2008 German study of teenagers discussed in this section, what types of youths were consistently found to have higher rates of exposure to violence in the household?
2. What did this study show regarding living in Germany over time did to such rates, and what did the authors provide as an explanation for this trend?

Sources: Van Dijk, J. (2008). *The world of crime*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage; World Health Organization. (2002). *World report on violence and health*. Geneva: Author; World Health Organization. (2004). *The economic dimensions of interpersonal violence*. Geneva: Author.