

Wives' Relative Income Production and Household Male Dominance: Examining Violence Among Asian American Enduring Couples*

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Abstract: This study integrates relative resource theory and cultural perspectives on husband-to-wife authority to examine male-to-female physical violence reported by Asian American wives in the National Latino and Asian American Survey. Findings indicated that the association between marital violence and male household dominance is complicated by women's income relative to husbands'. We speculate that when husbands face threats on multiple levels to culturally determined masculine spheres of dominance, they are more likely to aggress against the perceived source of their status decline—thereby reaffirming one mode of dominance (physical). Practical implications of the findings are discussed.

Key Words: Asian Americans, decision making, division of household labor, income, marital violence.

Evidence on the extent of intimate partner violence in Asian American populations has been contradictory. On the one hand, the federally sponsored National Violence Against Women Survey (NVAWS) (Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000), with representative samples of 8,000 women and 8,000 men, found lifetime prevalence rates for intimate partner violence among Asian American women to be far below those found for other groups—15% compared to 24.8% for Whites, 29.1% for African Americans, and 37.5% for Native Americans. In contrast, community-specific studies suggest that the occurrence of domestic violence varies considerably for certain subpopulations of Asian American couples and the annual prevalence rates are higher than the national rate of 1.3% found by the NVAWS. Reported violence against wives in the past year ranged from 6.8% in a Los Angeles-based sample of Chinese Americans (Yick, 2000)

to 37% and 60% among Vietnamese refugee and Korean American women, respectively (Kim & Sung, 2000; Song-Kim, 1992; Tran, 1997, as cited in Kim, Lau, & Chang, 2007). Other indicators support these trends: A Ford Foundation report cited greatly disproportionate domestic violence-related death rates among Asian American wives in Santa Clara County, California, and for the state of Massachusetts (Foo, 2002). Other studies document the recognition among various Asian American populations that domestic violence is a significant problem in their communities (Ho, 1990).

The equivocal nature of the research reflects in part the lack of national prevalence data on male-to-female physical violence (MFPV) of any sort on Asian Americans; tremendous diversity on the basis of culture, ethnicity, and national origin; and the group's geographic dispersion. Previous studies have been limited in generalizability by small sample sizes

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and the particularistic and nonrepresentative nature of the samples. The present study attempted to address a number of these concerns using the first-ever national mental health survey of Asian Americans, the National Latino and Asian American Survey (NLAAS; Alegria et al., 2004), to examine reported MFPV against Asian American wives.

Current Study

We conceptualized MFPV against Asian American wives as situated in the complex intersection of two distinct explanatory paradigms: women's increased economic empowerment (Espiritu, 1999; Kibria, 1990) and male dominance (Bui & Morash, 1999; Ho, 1990; Xu, Campbell, & Zhu, 2001). An emerging literature suggests that the more prominent domestic economic role increasingly played by Asian American women upon immigration might be related to marital violence, particularly when male dominance within marriage is challenged (Espiritu, 1999; Kibria, 1990; Shiu-Thornton, Senturia, & Sullivan, 2005). This body of literature proposes that as Asian American women have gained higher economic status via outside employment upon arrival in the United States, their nontraditional role as a co-breadwinner threatens men's sense of masculinity. Men are then more likely to rely on the use of physical force as a means to maintain their power and authority (Kibria; Shiu-Thornton et al.). We have found no evidence, however, that this notion theorizing husbands' increased likelihood of using violence in the context of male authority and wives' increased economic contribution has ever been empirically tested with Asian Americans. The present study was therefore designed to investigate the interplay between Asian American wives' relative income production and male household dominance from wives' perspectives as related to their own reports of their husbands' recent use of MFPV against them. The study also took into account previously identified correlates of partner violence. Existing evidence has consistently shown that marital violence is positively associated with younger age and lower levels of education and income (Thompson et al., 2006). In addition, low support from families and friends has been associated with a greater level of partner violence experienced by women (Coker, Watkins, Smith, & Brandt, 2003). Time spent in the United States has also been associated with partner violence—which makes it an especially

important indicator to examine in this population, given the high percentage of foreign-born among Asian Americans (Hyman, Forte, Du Mont, Romans, & Cohen, 2006).

This study focused on marriages lasting 5 years or more for two reasons. First, given that 20% of U.S. marriages end during the first 5 years (Bramlett & Mosher, 2001), one could view this phase as the "shake-out" period, weeding out those less committed to the institution or at least to life with that particular partner. In a series of studies, Huston, Niehuis, and Smith (2001) have found "early exiters" from marriage to be distinct at the outset; they were not particularly enamored or affectionate with each other even as newlyweds and fell quickly out of love. Thus, by eliminating this rather distinctive group in the current study, we sought to take a closer look at MFPV in relatively stable unions. Second, prior research indicates that 47% of battered women with injuries from MFPV leave their abuser within the first 5 years (Zlotnick, Johnson, & Kohn, 2006), suggesting that MFPV in longer marriages may be distinctive. In this sense, the context of MFPV in these longer term marriages may differ significantly from that associated with the violence that has ended or disrupted a marriage. By examining such unions, we sought to better understand the conditions under which MFPV occurred in relatively stable couples.

Conceptual Perspectives

The study's conceptual framework was derived from cultural perspectives on husband-to-wife authority used in previous examinations of domestic violence (Kim & Sung, 2000; Straus, Gelles, & Steinmetz, 1980) and relative resource theory (McCloskey, 1996). The cultural perspective views male dominance as a key element in MFPV. This perspective theorizes that in a patriarchal society, husbands perpetrate violence against wives to maintain their dominant status within the household. Further, relative resource theory posits that MFPV occurs in the context of women having greater resources (e.g., income) than their husbands. To our knowledge, there has been no empirical study of domestic violence among Asian Americans using this perspective, although the role of patriarchal ideology in Asian American wife abuse has been explored theoretically (e.g., Kim et al., 2007; Yick, 2001). In this light, integrating these two perspectives allows us to

examine whether and how the interplay between relative spousal resources and couple adherence to male dominance is associated with MFPV experienced by Asian American wives. Consistent with previous studies (e.g., Tichenor, 1999, 2005), adherence to male household dominance in the present study is reflected in two ways: final say in major decisions and the division of the household chores. Although gendered enactment of these tasks is one mechanism for constructing and maintaining male dominance in marriage (Tichenor, 2005), we argue that different patterns of power distribution as displayed by who performs these household tasks may have distinctive implications for male dominance in each household. To our knowledge, no studies have examined these associations among Asian Americans.

Relative resource theory. Traditionally, in Western and Asian societies, husbands have been the primary breadwinners and have typically held dominant positions of power and control in marriage. In recent years, however, women's growing prominence in economic and professional sectors in the United States has led to an increase in marriages that deviate from such traditional arrangements (Tichenor, 1999). In 2003, 25% of all dual-earner marriages consisted of status-reversal couples in which women made more money than their husbands (U.S. Census Bureau, 2005). According to relative resource theory, the level of marital violence would be highest in such couples because the wife's increased share of couple earnings challenges the traditional expectation of gendered status consistency (McCloskey, 1996). This theory posits that attainment of monetary resources, such as income, is a key predictor of marital violence. That is, men who earn relatively less money than their female partners use physical force to compensate for their relative deficiency and to reestablish male dominance. An underlying assumption of this theory is that the conventional arrangement of earnings in couples reinforces male dominance.

Clearly, though, economic production is only one area of gender-based patterning in marital households. Other gender-specific task enactments also play key roles in ensuring male status dominance (Tichenor, 2005). By focusing solely, or even primarily, on the distribution of monetary resources between spouses, relative resource theory provides only a partial explanation of why violence is more likely among female dominant-earner couples.

Cultural perspectives on male-female authority. Other literature suggests that relative resource theory alone may be inadequate for studying marital violence because it fails to address the process by which male dominance operates within each household. Recent analyses of marital violence in Asian American families using cultural perspectives on male-female authority point to the relevance of male dominance in Asian American populations. From this view, patriarchy provides a context in which men's use of physical force against their wives may be acceptable in certain situations within Asian American families (Ho, 1990; Xu et al., 2001). For instance, Yick and Agbayani-Siewert (1997) found that almost half of the respondents from 31 Chinese households reported that MFPV was justifiable on certain grounds, including wives' violation of gender roles. Although it is not our intention to convey that male dominance is more salient in Asian American households than in others, or that it manifests in the same way among all Asian Americans, evidence suggests that it is an important element to assess when analyzing marital violence in this population (e.g., Xu et al.). Previous studies in support of the cultural perspective show that male-dominant Asian American couples adhering to rigid divisions of gender were at greatest risk of husband-to-wife physical violence (Bui & Morash, 1999; Kim & Sung, 2000). For instance, Bui and Morash found that physically abusive Vietnamese American husbands were more likely than nonviolent husbands to be dominant in family decision making in such areas as household chores, childrearing, and finance.

An integrated approach. Prior research using the cultural perspective on male-female authority has sharpened our understanding of the relationship between male dominance and marital violence among Asian Americans. However, by not considering the emergent pattern of Asian American women's increased economic empowerment (Espiritu, 1999), this perspective does not adequately capture changing realities of many Asian American couples and its possible impact on the likelihood of violence in these families. There is evidence that Asian American female immigrants to the United States are able to secure employment more readily than immigrant men, thereby propelling some women into the untraditional role of economic provider (Shiu-Thornton et al., 2005; Yick, 2001). Further, changes in economic roles may cause shifts in household task enactments within couples, which

has implications for marital power as well as the likelihood of marital violence. This is especially salient in the context of the downward occupational mobility experienced by some Asian American men upon immigration, which has been shown to damage their sense of masculinity (Shiu-Thornton et al.). Thus, we believe that an integration of relative resource theory and the cultural perspective on male-female authority will allow a greater understanding of how gender-based patterns of economic production, as well as the distribution of power and household tasks, are associated with the risk of husbands' violence against wives.

Previous studies that examined household-related task arrangements among unconventional-earner couples, although not limited to Asian Americans, provide valuable insights in support of our integrative approach. In general, the research suggests that women's relatively higher income compared to husbands' may not always pose a risk for violence as long as men's masculinity is accommodated (Tichenor, 2005). Men's masculinity within marriage is constructed and maintained by conforming to various gender-appropriate behaviors. A cultural association of household labor, such as cooking and cleaning, with "women's work" suggests that doing housework is a form of feminine "gender display" (Brines, 1994, p. 654). Similarly, making major decisions in the household and breadwinning reflect an enactment of masculinity. These gendered associations have power implications where lesser power is assumed for doing housework, but a culturally masculine role of breadwinning is of greater power. Thus, violence is less likely even if women make more money than their husbands when expectations for male dominance are met by conforming to gender-specific tasks. Conversely, if gendered expectations are not met in the traditional way, men are likely to attempt to regain power and control using violence because male dominance is threatened.

The study by Tichenor (2005) nicely illustrates the above-mentioned reasoning. In her interview study of married couples where women earned more money than their husbands, both men and women reported that they were comfortable with a certain level of traditional gender inequality in their relationship, particularly when women's income was significantly higher. Consequently, men in this study continued to exercise greater control over decisions to compensate for women's greater resources. Further, these couples achieved marital harmony by

conforming to gender-specific task enactments, which reproduced male dominance.

Hypothesis

On the basis of our integrated theoretical approach and the extant literature, we hypothesized the following: The risk for MFPV will increase for women with equal or higher relative income but decrease for those with incomes lower than that of husbands as wives' reported gender display deviates more from traditional role (i.e., husband is responsible for performing household chores or wife is the primary decision maker). Stated alternatively, when Asian American wives are responsible for most or all of the household chores and practice no authority over household decision making, those who earn as much or more than husbands will be less likely to report violence compared to those who earn less.

Method

The NLAAS

The data for the present study were derived from the NLAAS (Alegria et al., 2004) conducted between May 2002 and December 2003. Sampling for the NLAAS included the following three phases: (a) Primary sampling units (i.e., metropolitan statistical areas or county units) and secondary sampling units, formed from contiguous groupings of census blocks, were selected using probabilities proportionate to size, from which housing units and household members were sampled. (b) Census block groups with greater than 5% density of target ancestry groups (Latino: Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican; Asian: Chinese, Filipino, Vietnamese) were oversampled using high-density supplemental sampling. Persons of Asian or Latino ancestry who did not belong to the target groups under which geographical areas were classified were still eligible to participate. Therefore, qualified residents in high-density communities (i.e., with greater than 5% density of target groups) actually had two opportunities for NLAAS recruitment: first through the core sampling strategy and second through the high-density sampling strategy. (c) Second respondent sampling was used to recruit participants from households in which one eligible member had already been interviewed. Weighting corrections were developed to take into account the

joint probabilities for selection under the three components of the NLAAS sampling design. Data were collected via interviews administered by trained bilingual interviewers in English, Spanish, Mandarin, Cantonese, Tagalog, and Vietnamese (see Alegria et al., 2004, for complete description of data collection procedure). The original measures used in NLAAS had been translated using standard translation and back-translation techniques by the bilingual staff members of the NLAAS team.

Sample

Using the NLAAS total sample of 2,095 Asian Americans, the present study examined the subset of 543 Asian American women between the ages of 18 and 65 who had been married for 5 years or longer (which excluded 120 wives, 18%, who were married less than 5 years). Weighted data were used for all analyses. The mean age of our weighted sample was 44.40 years ($SE = 0.61$). Respondents had been married for an average of 19.65 years ($SE = 0.63$) and had spent 43% of their lives in the United States ($SE = 0.03$). In terms of ethnic distribution, the largest group was Chinese (31.6%), followed by Filipina (21.9%) and Vietnamese (15.1%). The remaining respondents fell under the classification of “other Asians” (32.8%), which included Asian Indians (11.0%), Japanese (6.7%), Koreans (4.3%), Thais (2.7%), and Laotians (2.3%). Eighty-nine percent were foreign-born.

The level of representation among ethnic groups in the sample reflects the fact that special high-density supplements of Chinese, Vietnamese, and Filipino populations were obtained because these groups are more geographically concentrated in the United States than the other major Asian ancestry populations (Heeringa et al., 2004). It would have been economically prohibitive to obtain larger samples of more dispersed groups, such as Japanese Americans. Nearly half (47.3%) of the women reported having 13 – 16 years of education. Reported annual household incomes were higher than \$124,500 for 27.1% of the women, whereas 20.4% reported incomes below \$35,000. Sixty-two percent were employed at the time of the survey.

Variables

Outcome variable. In order to assess MFPV in the past 12 months, we used physical violence

questions from the marriage section of the NLAAS questionnaire, which were adapted from the Conflict Tactics Scales (Straus, Hamby, Boney-McCoy, & Sugarman, 1996). To assess annual prevalence for minor violence, respondents were asked, “Did your spouse do any of these things (pushed, grabbed, or shoved, threw something, slapped or hit) to you in the past 12 months?” For severe violence, respondents were asked, “Did your spouse do any of these things (kicked, bit or hit with a fist, beat up, choked, burnt or scalded, or threatened with a knife or a gun) to you in the past 12 months?” For the present study, we created a 0 – 1 dichotomous variable on the basis of their original responses as an indicator of whether or not a respondent experienced any physical violence in the past 12 months (i.e., 0 = *no*; 1 = *yes*).

Predictor variables. To assess couple adherence to male dominance, we used the questions on household decision making and the performance of chores from the marriage section of the NLAAS questionnaire. The two decision-making questions were as follows: “When it comes to making major decisions, who has the final say?” on a 3-point Likert-type scale (1 = *self*; 2 = *both self and spouse*; 3 = *spouse*) and “Do you have a lot more say, somewhat, or only a little more say than your spouse?” on a 3-point Likert-type scale (1 = *a lot*; 3 = *a little*). The scores from these two questions were summed and then placed into categories, with higher scores reflecting greater traditionality (i.e., 1 = *very liberal*; 4 = *egalitarian*; 7 = *very traditional*). The household chore question asked, “When it comes to household chores—like cleaning, cooking, childcare, grocery shopping—who has the most responsibility—only you, mostly you and sometimes your spouse, you and your spouse about the same, mostly your spouse and sometimes you, or only your spouse?” on a 5-point scale (1 = *only you*; 5 = *only spouse*). The responses from the household chore question were reverse scored and grouped into five categories (i.e., 1 = *very liberal*; 3 = *egalitarian*; 5 = *very traditional*), with higher scores indicating greater traditionality. As zero values in several original categories prevented statistical analyses, we collapsed the original categories into three levels of adherence to male dominance in the areas of decision making and household labor performance. In this manner, lower scores represented less adherence to male dominance (i.e., for decision making: 1 = *Low* (Wife), 2 = *Egalitarian* (Both), 3 = *High* (Husband)) and reversed the direction of household chore division.

Several steps were taken to assess the wife's relative income compared to the husband's. First, in the employment section of the NLAAS questionnaire, female respondents were asked to choose an income range from an earnings table separately for their own earning and for their husbands' income from the past year. The first two income categories were "loss" and "none." Earnings up to \$19,999 were broken down into categories of an income range with an increment of \$999; income between \$20,000 and \$49,999 with an increment of \$4,999; income between \$50,000 and \$99,999 with an increment of \$24,999; income between \$100,000 and \$199,999 with an increment of \$49,999; and income between \$200,000 and \$499,999 with an increment of \$199,999. The last two categories were \$500,000 – \$999,999 and \$1,000,000 or more. Each category was numbered so that a higher number reflected a higher income range (1: loss, 36: a million or more). To compare women's income with their husbands', the number assigned for a husband's income range was subtracted from that of the wife's. For instance, a negative number indicated that a husband had higher income than his wife past year. Negative scores were categorized into "0" indicating that a wife earned less than her husband. Zeros and positive scores were categorized into "1" indicating that a wife made equal or more money than her husband in the past year.

Control variables. As mentioned earlier, the present study controlled for the following previously identified correlates of partner violence: women's age, women's education, imputed annual household income, women's proportion of life spent in United States, and women's level of family support. Family support was measured by the family support questions in the social networks section of the NLAAS questionnaire. It was assessed by asking respondents the following questions: (1) "How often do you talk on the phone or get together with family or relatives who do not live with you?" (2) "How much can you rely on relatives who do not live with you for help if you have a serious problem?" and (3) "How much can you open up to relatives if you need to talk about your worries?" The response choices for Question (1) were "most every day," "a few times a week," "a few times a month," "once a month," and "less than once a month." For Questions (2) and (3), the response choices were "a lot," "some," "a little," and "not at all." Scores were summed so that higher scores reflected greater family support.

Results

Descriptive Analyses

MFPV in the past 12 months was reported by 6.3% ($n = 31$) of our sample of Asian American women married at least 5 years. Five women did not respond to this question and were entered as missing (0.9%). Wives with a history of MFPV in the past year were significantly different on several variables from women who did not report any MFPV (Table 1). The women who experienced MFPV were significantly younger and more likely to be responsible for most or all of the household chores and to make equal or higher income than their husbands. The relative power within the couple to make decisions was not significantly related to women's experience of violence. Although not reported in Table 1, we found the bivariate results of two variables worth noting. First, women who experienced MFPV within the past year had been married for a significantly shorter period of time ($M = 14.61$ years, $SE = 1.61$) than nonabused women ($M = 19.98$ years, $SE = 0.68$). In addition, about 57% of the abused women reported being violent toward their husbands compared to only 4.6% of the nonabused women. However, it could not be determined from the data whether this particular violence was female initiated or violence as a defense against MFPV. Finally, a little less than half (43%) of the abused Asian American wives did not physically resist or initiate violence.

Multivariate Analyses

To account for sampling design effects of stratification and clustering, we used the STATA "svy" ("survey") procedure for our multivariate analyses. Weighted logistic regression analyses were performed to estimate the multivariate effects of the predictor variables on any MFPV in the past year. Although not significantly correlated with the outcome variable in bivariate analyses, decision making was entered into our model because it was thought to be an important indicator of couples' enactment of gender. All models controlled for age, education, annual household income, family support, and proportion of life spent in United States.

The main effects model and two interaction effects models are presented in Table 2. In the main

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics on Key Variables for Women Married At Least 5 Years

Continuous Variables	Any MFPV in the Past 12 Months (<i>n</i> = 31)		No MFPV in the Past 12 Months (<i>n</i> = 507)		Difference
	Weighted Mean	SE	Weighted Mean	SE	<i>t</i>
Age (24 – 65 years)	40.20	1.55	44.69	0.61	–2.37*
Proportion of age in United States (0.00 – 1.00)	0.50	0.07	0.43	0.03	1.18
Imputed annual household income (\$)	99,974.66	19,487.80	91,921.74	3,870.68	0.43
Family support (range: 5 – 15)	9.96	0.52	11.03	0.15	–1.97
Categorical Variables	Weighted %		Weighted %		χ^2
Imputed education for women (in years)					1.19
≤11	14.08		20.52		
12	5.60		18.71		
13 – 16	58.88		46.41		
17 or more	21.44		14.36		
Decision making					1.10
Wife	30.22		16.78		
Both	49.28		53.96		
Husband	20.50		29.26		
Household chores					4.35*
Husband	11.50		3.03		
Both	13.40		35.71		
Wife	75.10		61.26		
Wife's relative income					4.86*
Less	41.60		67.20		
Equal or higher	58.40		32.80		

Note. MFPV = male-to-female physical violence.

**p* ≤ .05.

effects model, wives who made equal or higher income in the past year relative to their husbands were 4.9 times more likely than wives with less income to experience MFPV in the past year (Table 2). In addition, women who shared housework with their husbands were significantly less likely to experience violence than women whose husbands bore greater responsibility for housework. Whether the wife or husband (or both) made major decisions did not predict MFPV in the past 12 months.

Because our sample contained a relatively small number of women with a history of MFPV in the previous year (*n* = 31), we entered each of the two-way interaction terms separately into the main effects model in order to determine support for our hypothesis that the effect of couples' adherence to

male dominance on MFPV would be moderated by wives' relative income. In each interaction model, women's relative income moderated the association between MFPV and an indicator of household male dominance (Table 2). Division of household chores was a significant predictor for MFPV. Women's age ($B = -0.07, -0.07; p < .02, .01$) and family support ($B = -0.23, -0.27; p < .02, .01$) also remained significant predictors of MFPV in both models.

The two-way interaction effects are depicted in Figure 1a and b. Because of sample size constraints, we were unable to test for three-way interactions. All intervally scaled control variables were mean centered so that the interaction terms were evaluated at the means of the control variables and the other centered predictor variables. Log odds were then

Table 2. Summary of Weighted Logistic Regression Analyses for Selected Variables Predicting Any MFPV in the Past Year (n = 534)

Predictor Variables (Key Variables)	Main Effects		Interaction Effects 1		Interaction Effects 2	
	B (SE B)	e ^B	B (SE B)	e ^B	B (SE B)	e ^B
Wife's relative income (\$)						
Level 1: Lower	—	—	—	—	—	—
Level 2: Equal or higher	1.58 (0.50)**	4.87	3.48 (1.04)**	32.27	-0.95 (1.03)	0.39
Decision making						
Level 1: Wife	—	—	—	—	—	—
Level 2: Both	-0.31 (0.54)	0.74	1.22 (0.96)	3.40	-0.33 (0.55)	0.72
Level 3: Husband	-0.46 (0.72)	0.63	1.44 (1.09)	4.21	-0.41 (0.70)	0.67
Division of household chores						
Level 1: Husband	—	—	—	—	—	—
Level 2: Both	-2.28 (0.92)*	0.10	-2.37 (0.98)*	0.09	-3.25 (1.13)**	0.04
Level 3: Wife	-0.70 (0.80)	0.50	-0.75 (0.81)	0.47	-2.97 (0.91)**	0.05
Interactions with wife's relative income (\$)						
Wife's relative income × Decision Making by Wife	—	—	—	—	—	—
Wife's relative income × Decision Making by Both	—	—	-2.11 (1.40)	0.12	—	—
Wife's relative income × Decision Making by Husband	—	—	-3.33 (1.39)*	0.03	—	—
Wife's relative income × Housework by Husband	—	—	—	—	—	—
Wife's relative income × Housework by Both	—	—	—	—	0.83 (1.50)	2.30
Wife's relative income × Housework by Wife	—	—	—	—	3.10 (1.11)**	22.28
Constant	1.30		.16		3.50	
df	33		33		33	
p	.0001		.0012		.0001	

Note. Controls are age, education, household income, proportion of life spent in United States, and family support (omitted from the table). MFPV = male-to-female physical violence. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

converted to probabilities, using the following formula: $P = e^{\log \text{odds}} / (1 + e^{\log \text{odds}})$.

The interaction effects demonstrated that the impact of male household dominance on MFPV varied as a function of wife's relative income. As shown in Figure 1a, the probability of MFPV was highest when women who earned as much or relatively more than their husbands were also the primary decision makers. However, the likelihood of these women experiencing MFPV significantly decreased as their husbands practiced more authority over household decision making.

Contrary to our hypothesis, when Asian American wives made equal or relatively higher income than their husbands, they were significantly more likely than wives with less relative income to report MFPV—despite these wives greater share of the

housework (Figure 1b). Further, the probability of MFPV was lowest for each income group when housework was shared (Figure 1b). Although the small sample size prevented a detailed examination of the role played by ethnicity/national origin in these findings, we did enter ethnicity into our models and found that interaction effects were unchanged.

Discussion

In this study, we used an integrative framework to predict MFPV in the past year among Asian American wives in longer term marriages. In general, the study confirmed our hypothesis that the association between marital violence and couple adherence to male dominance in each household is complicated

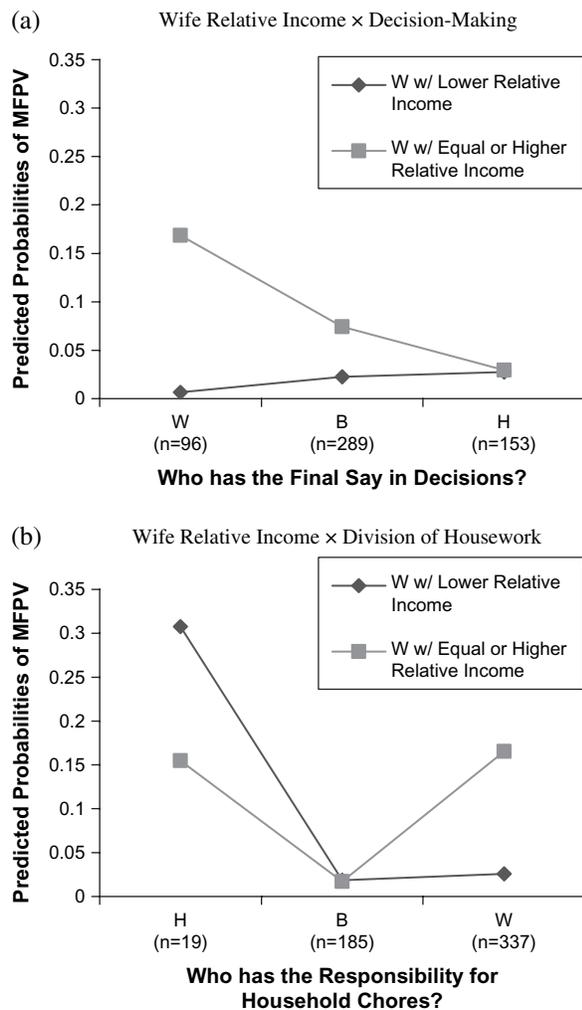


Figure 1. Predicted Probabilities of Male-to-Female Physical Violence (MFPV) Experienced by Asian American Wives: Select Comparisons of the Decision Making and the Division of Housework With Wife's Relative Income. (a) Wife's Relative Income × Decision Making. (b) Wife's Relative Income × Division of Housework.

Note. Wife is denoted by W, both by B, and husband by H. Each *n* in parentheses represents the total number of Asian American wives in each level of the three categories on *x* axis.

by the pattern of women's income production relative to their husbands. These findings add to the existing knowledge about MFPV in Asian American families by revealing how male dominance can interact with the wife's relative income contribution and impact on the likelihood of MFPV, particularly within enduring unions. In this section, we discuss these findings, keeping in mind the fact that these relationships have been maintained over time.

First, it should be noted that the prevalence of past year MFPV observed in this study, 6.3%, was

greater than that found for U.S. women overall (1.3%) in the NVAWS (Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000), using the same measure of MFPV. This finding serves as evidence that Asian Americans may be more violent toward their partners than previously assumed (Tjaden & Thoennes). Given that the small sample sizes of Asian Americans in previous studies (e.g., 133 of 8,000 in the NVAWS) constitute a major limitation in the domestic violence research, our finding is bolstered by our substantially larger sample size of Asian American wives ($n = 534$). In addition, given that the prevalence rate in this study was obtained only for the enduring unions, it is likely that the rate of domestic violence may be even greater for Asian American marriages in general. Non-representative, community sample-based studies have also produced higher annual rates of MFPV. Taken together, these findings suggest that domestic violence is a significant issue in Asian American communities and special efforts may be required to determine the true nature and extent of the problem.

The saliency of male dominance in MFPV was evidenced among Asian American enduring couples in the association between decision-making power and MFPV across the two income groups. We found that greater female dominance over decision making placed Asian American wives at higher risk for partner violence only if they earned as much or more than their husbands. It appears that Asian American wives are at a higher risk for MFPV when they are in the position of power in terms of both household economics and decisions because in this context, husbands may attempt to reassert their control through violence. Consistently, when greater authority was given to husbands over decisions, the risk of MFPV for these unconventional female earners decreased substantially. We speculate that the husbands' decision-making power in these unions may have helped maintain their sense of masculinity, which may have been otherwise threatened by wives' greater monetary resources. It appears, then, that a sense of male power and dominance continues to have important implications for relatively stable Asian American marriages, such that a deviation from the traditional arrangement of household power increases the risk of MFPV. On the other hand, efforts to uphold traditional arrangements, despite the changes in economic roles, significantly reduce the risk of MFPV.

It is particularly interesting to note that in our sample of Asian American wives in enduring unions, the risk for MFPV was higher when those wives had

a greater share of household chores, despite their equal or greater contributions to household economics relative to their husbands. This is contrary to previous research that was not Asian American focused, which suggested that conforming to a gendered practice of household labor by female co-breadwinners may be protective against MFPV (Tichenor, 2005). Given the enduring nature of our sample's marriages, wives' higher participation in household labor may be a domestically established pattern in these families. Because sharing household responsibilities is associated with lower levels of physical conflict, higher earning Asian American wives may feel freer to confront husbands when the division of household labor is unequal. Consequently, the level of marital conflict may be elevated, possibly leading to violence. Indeed, previous research has shown that having more resources can encourage women to contest power relations and household labor (Espiritu, 1999). We argue further that it may be the combination of unequal division of household labor and the significant monetary contribution that allows Asian American wives to challenge inequity in marriage.

Although it did not reach the .05 level of significance, a lower risk for MFPV was observed in the context of the shared division of household chores across the two income groups. Because this interaction did not achieve scientific significance, possibly because of a small number of women reporting actual MFPV, we are hesitant to make definitive statements. However, we believe that this observation allows for a glimpse into the importance of gender equality around housework as a protective factor against MFPV in Asian American stable unions. Although previous studies found the lowest level of MFPV among egalitarian couples (e.g., Kim & Sung, 2000), a specific association with the division of housework was not tested. Thus, it might be worthwhile for future research to use a larger sample in order to examine whether shared household labor has a similar impact on the likelihood of MFPV.

Liu and Chang (2007) argued that patriarchal privilege and power are "artifacts" within our cultural notions of masculinity that Asian American men, as well as those in the dominant culture, struggle to "retain" or "regain." Though this notion of patriarchal privilege is common across race and ethnicity in the United States, the specific circumstances perceived as threats to male status may vary by group and setting. Older Asian American men and recent immigrants (particularly from South-East

Asia) are more likely to perceive a wife's economic gains as such a threat and may employ domestic violence in an attempt to regain their "patriarchal positions" (Liu & Chang). Our findings shed additional light on the conditions under which these kinds of strategies are likely to be employed.

Practical Implications

These results have important implications for professionals working with couples. We believe that the present study provides valuable insights for violence prevention and intervention. Overall, our findings suggest that professionals should be alert to the challenges and conflicts faced by dual-earner couples around performing household-related tasks, such as decision making and household chores. For instance, sharing of household chores within dual-earner couples appears to have potential for alleviating the burden of working wives and minimizing the risk for marital violence. Dual-earner couples are now the dominant mode of family life. Conceptualizations of gender-appropriate task performance must change to keep pace with the realities of family life. This may be especially difficult for immigrants new to American society or for persons with strong cultural values that may be in conflict with contemporary demands on women and men. However, there is evidence of cultural adaptation over time to variations in gendered household economic patterns. Furdyna, Tucker, and James (in press) found that White wives who earned a greater share of household income tended to be less happy in their marriages, a pattern absent among African American wives. They argued that the economic constraints historically faced by African Americans had made women's earning power an acceptable aspect of married life.

In order to help Asian American couples understand the value of sharing household tasks in a culturally sensitive manner, we recommend collaborating with family professionals who are married, older, and experienced from reputable local Asian American organizations. These characteristics are associated with credibility, which can help professionals reach Asian American couples more effectively in establishing trust with them and delivering interventions (Tan & Dong, 2000). In addition, it is important for family professionals to be of the same gender as the target audience, given the potential resistance to reorganizing long-established patterns of gender-based household practices. For instance, it

would be more effective to have a male professional promote sharing of household tasks to Asian American husbands from a male perspective than to have a female professional convey such a message to a group of husbands. Further, although cultural ideals such as family privacy and saving face are shared among Asian Americans (Ho, 1990), a tremendous diversity exists in terms of native language, competency with English, and country of origin. Thus, it is important to deliver interventions in a language that the target group is most comfortable with. Also, for recent immigrants, interventions might be more effective when a family professional is of the same ethnic origin, which could ease a potential concern for losing face and discomfort associated with discussing family privacy such as domestic practices with a third party.

Intervention program development for men who are violent with women partners is another area where our findings may also be useful. Because the findings suggest that the likelihood of perpetrating MFPV varies by men's relative power over decision making and participation in household chores as a function of wives' relative income, it may be effective to consider the distinctions among men who commit domestic violence and to introduce specifically tailored strategies aimed to reduce MFPV separately for each group. For instance, for violent Asian American men who make the same or lower income than their wives and may be resentful about doing most or all of the housework, intervention counselors might want to focus on reconceptualizing their sense of masculinity, considering alternate strategies for maintaining a masculine identity or fostering an egalitarian gender ideology, or both.

Limitations and Future Research

The present study has several limitations that must be noted. Even in this large nationally representative sample, the number of women reporting MFPV in the past year was small ($n = 31$), which limits our ability to fully examine the suggested interaction patterns. Future research using purposive sampling strategies to specifically target more women with a recent history of MFPV is needed. Although the present study did not assess the frequency of MFPV because of missing values, including this variable in future research would allow for a more effective assessment of MFPV. For instance, women who experienced only one violent episode of MFPV in

the past year may be distinct from those with a history of multiple episodes. Further, future research should expand beyond Asian American wives to include reports from husbands as well as individuals with other ethnic backgrounds to see to what extent our findings represent other groups. Although female-to-male physical violence (FMPV) was not the focus of the present study, its high correlation with the study variables in our initial analysis suggests that FMPV merits further attention. In addition, our measure of male dominance was based only on a single item asking about household chore performance and decision making. Thus, future research should include multiple dimensions of male dominance by assessing, for instance, couple division of both female and male chores, and the decision maker in specified areas (i.e., children's education, finance). Finally, as Kim et al. (2007) discussed in their most recent review, the failure of existing studies to more fully consider the dimensions of partner violence in Asian American families raises a concern for the cultural validity of the scales used. As Yoshihama (1999) has done in her work, inclusion of items that may be more culturally relevant to recent immigrants from Asia (e.g., turning over a dining table, pouring water over someone's face) in future research could more accurately assess the prevalence rate of couple violence in this population.

Conclusions

Through the use of an integrative approach, this study has demonstrated that it is neither gender-based household practices nor relative resource alone that predicts MFPV experienced by Asian American wives but rather the interplay between the two in specific circumstances. In particular, our findings add to the existing knowledge of MFPV by delineating two distinct contexts of household male dominance where the likelihood of MFPV is differentially conditional upon who takes care of the household chores or makes major decisions as a function of wife's relative income.

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