

The Effects of Acculturation on Intimate Partner Violence Among Chinese Immigrants in New York City

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Abstract Little research has examined the role of acculturation in the determination of intimate partner violence (IPV) among Chinese immigrants in the United States. Data on 166 IPV Chinese immigrant couples obtained from a Chinese American community organization were analyzed for this study. Findings show that the level of acculturation and socioeconomic status were associated with severity, frequency, length, and type of abuse committed by Chinese immigrant men although not all factors played an equally important role in explaining IPV. Certain Chinese immigrant victim characteristics, such as having social networks, were also related to the experience of IPV.

Keywords Immigration · Level of acculturation · Characteristics of IPV victims and offenders · Chinese immigrant communities · Culturally sensitive community programs · Type of abuse

Intimate partner violence (IPV) is a serious social problem in the United States (Lee 2007; Yick and Oomen-Early 2008), and IPV is one of the most common forms of violence experienced by immigrant women (Davis and Erez 1998). Despite the low rates reported in governmental publications of IPV among Asian Americans (Catalano 2012; Tjaden and Thoennes 2000), many scholars believe that the incidence of IPV among Asian immigrants is actually higher, albeit underreported due to associated stigma, language barriers, and fear of losing face when compared

with other race groups (Chan 2009; Hicks 2006; Shen 2011). The population of Asian immigrants in the USA is increasing at a faster rate than other immigrant groups (Hoeffel et al. 2012); therefore, understanding the causal dynamics underlying IPV incidents among Asian immigrants becomes an important research challenge. This study on the role of acculturation aims to fill a gap in existing research, as only limited research attention has been devoted to the problem of IPV among Asian immigrants.

While many scholars find that the causes of IPV among Asian immigrants are rooted in a patriarchal culture (Chaudhuri et al. 2014; Ho 1990; Parish et al. 2004; Yoshioka et al. 2001), evidence indicates that the level of acculturation also plays an important role in IPV (Caetano et al. 2000; Jasinski 1998; Nilsson et al. 2008; Raj and Silverman 2003). Acculturation refers to cultural and psychological changes of individuals and groups through the direct contact with two different cultures (Graves 1967; Redfield et al. 1936). Immigrants attempt to adjust in host countries by utilizing various adaptive strategies. When individuals do not have acculturative strategies to cope with challenges they face, they experience acculturative stress (Berry 2005). The degree of acculturation among immigrants varies due to factors such as educational level, socioeconomic status (SES), language acquisition ability, and legal status (Arbona et al. 2010; Dow 2011).

The purpose of this study is to examine the effect of acculturation on the occurrence of IPV among Chinese immigrants. Acculturation in this study is measured with variables such as legal status and English language proficiency. Certain victim characteristics such as employment status or social networks have also been examined as they tend to play an important role in the interpersonal relationship with offenders and thus become important factors of IPV among immigrants. Possible policy implications for the treatment of Chinese immigrant offenders will be discussed.

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Culture, Acculturation, and Intimate Partner Violence Among Asian Immigrants

Feminist theories, social isolation theories, and power-control theories have attempted to explain the occurrence of IPV (Antai 2011; Farris and Fenaughty 2002; Gelles 1993; Sokoloff and Dupont 2005). All these theories are useful to a certain extent to understand the occurrence of IPV in the general population as they have found some empirical support (Bell and Naugle 2008), but researchers often attribute violence among Asian immigrants to traditional cultural factors (Chaudhuri et al. 2014; Ho 1990; Parish et al. 2004; Yoshioka et al. 2001) since IPV tends to occur frequently in patriarchal societies. In patriarchal societies, women occupy a subordinate position in the traditional family structure, and men tend to regard women as “objects” to be possessed (Shibusawa and Yick 2007). As a result of this depersonalization process, women become vulnerable to violence from men.

Traditional patriarchal power structures and ideologies play a role in the occurrence of IPV among Asian families. Individuals can be seen as passive carriers of traditions who act out their internalized norms and values through observable behaviors and patterns of interaction. Through telephone interviews with 256 Korean Americans, Kim and Sung (2000) reported that the rate of severe violence and wife beating in male dominant couples in which males have greater decision making power in family matters was four times higher than in egalitarian couples. Furthermore, Yoshioka et al. (2001) found that marital violence was closely related to belief in traditional gender roles and norms. Cultural approval of gender inequality increases not only the risk of offending among males but also the vulnerability of women. Women who hold patriarchal beliefs also think that wife-battering is permissible in some situations (Parish et al. 2004) and consider sexual intercourse a right of the husband (Midlarsky et al. 2006). Given the pervasiveness of these traditional beliefs and cultural values, both perpetrators and victims of IPV rationalize and reinforce IPV behaviors.

While culture is most often presented to non-immigrants as a stable and affirming reality, for immigrants normative rules are always contested and re-negotiated. Behavioral codes are continuously unlearned and relearned as part of their immigration and acculturation process. Acculturation involves various forms of psychological and socio-cultural adaptations among groups in contact such as “learning each other’s language, sharing each other’s food preferences and adopting forms of dress and social interaction” (Berry 2005, p. 700). Not all individuals and groups experience the same level of acculturation (Berry 2005). Individuals can develop or adopt different strategies of acculturation but when individuals lack adequate acculturative strategies to cope with challenges they face (Berry 2005), they are more likely to experience stress (Berry 1970; Wu and Mak 2012), interpersonal isolation

(Concha et al. 2013), and social failures (Warner et al. 2010; Titzmann et al. 2014).

Four different strategies of acculturation into a host society have been proposed: separation, marginalization, assimilation, and integration (Berry 1970). Individuals who are integrated are proactively interacting with a dominant culture as well as maintaining their own culture. Individuals who are separate are disconnected from the dominant culture while maintaining their own culture. Those who have assimilated are embedded in the dominant society while disconnecting from their own culture. Finally, marginalized individuals neither maintain their own culture nor connect with the dominant culture. The development and deployment of specific acculturative strategies are influenced by personal attributes such as age, socio-economic status (SES), and language acquisition (Dow 2011), which determine the variation in the degree and rate of acculturation across groups and across individuals of the same group (Berry 1997; Dow 2011; Negy and Woods 1992). Immigrants with higher level of SES have more social, intellectual, and economic resources to overcome the external barriers (i.e., better acculturative strategies) and to cope with their internal distress (Dow 2011).

There are some possible explanations for why the level of acculturation is associated with IPV. Immigrant life conditions and circumstances that immigrants encounter in the process of acculturation are powerful stressors (Caplan 2007). On top of that, less acculturated immigrants often lack access to social capital and social networks, which can increase the financial, emotional, and social dependency on offenders, increase offenders’ control over victims (Concha et al. 2013), exacerbate stress, and feed into a cycle of isolation and marginalization, which is one of risk factors of IPV (Lueck and Wilson 2010; Concha et al. 2013).

The lower level of acculturation is positively correlated with various forms of violent mentation and behavior such as suicidal ideation, interpersonal aggression, depression, and IPV (Caetano et al. 2000; Hovey 2000; Wei et al. 2007; Smokowski et al. 2009). For example, among Somali refugee women who have experienced IPV, Nilsson et al. (2008) found that less acculturated women are more likely to experience both psychological abuse and physical aggression from their partners compared to more acculturated women. These findings suggest that acculturation has an impact not only on self-harming behaviors, but also on abusive behaviors toward other individuals.

Experience of Intimate Partner Violence and Victim’s Characteristics

Intimate partner violence among immigrants is a highly interactive process in which at-risk men and vulnerable women act

and react in patterns that consolidate the aggressive behaviors of men and increase the vulnerability of women over time: Immigrant men are most likely to act out their acculturative stress against their intimate partners when the women are economically dependent on them (Cho 2011; Golden et al. 2013; Hyman et al. 2008; Morash et al. 2008). Financial and/or legal dependence of women can serve as situational facilitators that effectively exacerbate the aggressive impulses of men under unmanageable strains. However, at the same time, financial independence or achievement of women can increase the risk of occurrence of violence especially when men experience or perceive their loss of power vis-à-vis women (Han et al. 2010; Jin and Keat 2010; Morash et al. 2000). Thus, both financial dependence and independence of immigrant women might increase the risk of abuse by men depending on the situation.

Immigrant women have lower educational attainment (Everett et al. 2011) and face more limited employment options than native-born women (Cooke et al. 2009). Each of these can provide supportive social networks and resources (Thoits 1986). By the same token, housewives fear becoming undocumented if they leave their abusive husbands (Bhuyan 2008), whereas undocumented women fear being deported and permanently separated from their children (Murdaugh et al. 2004). All these characteristics of immigrant victims might influence offenders' abusive behaviors. Thus, looking at not only offenders' but also victims' characteristics will provide a fuller picture of the phenomenon of IPV in immigrant communities.

Intimate partner violence victims tend to experience not only physical abuse but also non-physical abuse such as verbal, economical, or psychological abuse. Not many researchers have paid attention to these non-physical types of abuse (Outlaw 2009). As a result, when researchers measure frequency or severity of IPV, they tend to focus heavily on the physical aspect of abuse (Strauchler et al. 2004) although non-physical abuse may also cause serious harm to victims (Outlaw 2009; Strauchler et al. 2004). Taking into account earlier findings that victims tend to experience more than one type of abuse simultaneously (Thompson et al. 2006) and experiencing multiple types of abuse is a more serious form of IPV than experiencing just one type of abuse (Pico-Alfonso et al. 2006; Warner et al. 2010), it is important to look at not only physical types of abuse but also non-physical types of abuse victims that experience.

Chinese Immigrants and Intimate Partner Violence

The Asian population—in particular the Chinese—grew faster than any other race group in the USA over the last decade (Hoeffel et al. 2012). According to a study of Asian Americans - Chinese, Filipino, Indian, Japanese, Korean, and Vietnamese, Vietnamese had the highest prevalence rate (22.4 %) of physical abuse of intimate partners while Chinese and Japanese had the lowest prevalence rate (9.5 %) (Leung and Cheung 2008).

However, many scholars believe that reported levels of IPV among the Chinese population are much lower than they are in actuality due to underreporting, which is severe because of stigmatization and the deeply embedded concept of saving “face” associated with IPV in this community (Chan 2012; Ho 1990; Lee and Au 1998; Leung and Cheung 2008; Yick 2000).

Not only is the IPV rate among Chinese immigrants likely to be underreported as compared to other Asian Americans, but also the role of acculturation, of the lack of it, in the determination of IPV may be underplayed among Chinese immigrants. According to a report by Min (2013), Chinese immigrants in the New York area are more likely to have less than a high school educational level and are substantially less likely to have college graduation rates comparable to other Asian subgroups such as Koreans, Filipinos, or Indian immigrants. Similarly, a high proportion of first-generation Chinese immigrants earned wages below the poverty line partially because of limited English ability and undocumented legal status. Chinese immigrants tend to be concentrated in densely populated, socially isolated ethnic enclaves or *ethnoburbs* not always found among other immigrant groups (Chin 1996; Li and Skop 2007). Not all Chinese immigrants in New York are of low SES and there are groups of Chinese immigrants who are highly educated and have higher incomes (Kwong 1996). We nonetheless anticipate that acculturation could be more difficult for many in this subgroup compared to other subgroups. Only a small percentage of Chinese immigrant men in this study have higher incomes despite their employment status and educational level.

Three additional factors might contribute the occurrence of IPV among Chinese immigrant men in the process of acculturation. First, traditional Chinese cultural norms tend to place men in a powerful position to dispense discipline to children and to control their families (Chen 2009; Ho 1990; Hwang 2009; Lee 1982). However, many Chinese immigrant men often experience or perceive a loss of decision-making power after immigration and in the process of acculturation (Jin and Keat 2010). Studies have revealed an association between the disempowerment of immigrant men and IPV offending (Han et al. 2010; Morash et al. 2000). Secondly, collectivist values and hierarchical ordering of social relations stemming from Confucianism are radically different from the individualism and egalitarianism of Anglo-Saxon culture. Evidence indicates that when the extent of differences between the ethnic culture and the new host culture is large, the acculturation process is longer and more difficult (Sodowsky and Lai 1997; Pan and Wong 2011). Finally, similar to many other immigrant groups, the Chinese come to the USA for better economic and educational opportunities as well as a better life. However, the frustrating experiences of discrimination and language barriers often lead them to conclude that their life conditions have not significantly improved (Chan and Leong 1994). These arguments together suggest that Chinese immigrant men are fraught with acculturative challenges, which might lead to or intensify IPV.

Psychological health problems, such as depression, which are associated with aggressive behavior and IPV victimization and perpetration (Graham et al. 2012), are more stigmatized within the Asian community (Chung 2002; Hsu et al. 2008; Kim and Rew 1994). Chinese immigrants seldom reveal to others the symptoms related to their emotional disturbances, including to mental health professionals (Hwang and Myers 2007). As a consequence, it is likely that symptoms associated with acculturation difficulties may develop into more serious problems. Underuse of the mental health system can itself be expected to increase IPV among the Chinese immigrant population. We can expect that an examination of the impact of acculturation on Chinese immigrant men and IPV will help us to understand how IPV can be prevented in this vulnerable subgroup.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

Five hypotheses are proposed to examine the relationship between proxy measures of acculturation and seriousness of abuse, as well as the frequency, length, and type of abuse among Chinese immigrant IPV perpetrators.

Q1 What is the relationship between Chinese immigrant men's low level of acculturation, SES, and the perpetration of IPV?

H1: Chinese immigrant perpetrators of IPV with low levels of acculturation are more likely to engage in more serious, frequent, and lengthy abuse.

H2: Chinese immigrant perpetrators of IPV with low socioeconomic status (i.e., low educational level, low income, and unemployed) are more likely to engage in more serious, frequent, and lengthy abuse.

H3 Chinese immigrant perpetrators of IPV with lower levels of acculturation and low socioeconomic status are more likely to engage in different types of abuse compared with those with higher levels of acculturation.

Q2 How do characteristics of victims play a role in the perpetration of IPV by Chinese immigrant men?

H4: Severity, frequency, and length of abuse by Chinese immigrant perpetrators of IPV increases as victims are more dependent on their abusers in terms of support network, immigration status, finances, and level of acculturation.

Methods

To test these hypotheses, data about victims and their offenders were obtained from IPV victims through intake

interviews and progress reports of Chinese women who sought assistance from the Chinese community organization "Garden of Hope." Garden of Hope (GOH) is a not-for-profit organization established in 2004 and serves victims of intimate partner violence among Chinese immigrants in New York City (Garden of Hope 2012). It relies on case management to provide victims with culturally competent services.

Sample

The study sample consists of 166 pairs of Chinese immigrant victim-offenders in New York City. Between August 2004 and September 2009, a total of 210 Chinese immigrant women sought IPV victim services from GOH and became clients in GOH's case management system. As not all offenders in these cases were Chinese immigrants, cases involving offenders from other ethnic groups were excluded.¹ As a result, a total of 166 cases of IPV victims of male Chinese immigrant offenders were selected and analyzed for this study.

The mean age of abusers in this study was 48, and ranged from 20 to 94 years old. The mean age of victims was 44 and ranged between 20 and 79. The age of victims, on average, was slightly younger than that of offenders, and the experience of victimization as well as offending is not limited to either young or old individuals.

Over 65 % of victims and offenders were married to each other. Among the victims married to offenders, the mean length of marriage was 12 years, but ranging from less than 1 month to 52 years. Seventy-three percent of victims had at least one support network type to draw upon—friends, family, relatives, or church—and the maximum number of support network type among victims was three. Among those who have at least one support network, a large number of the victims in this study had family (31 %) and/or friends (39 %).

Data Collection

Data were first coded and computerized from archived intake interviews and progress reports of victims. The intake forms and progress reports were standardized close-ended questionnaires designed and used for administrative purposes. Information about offenders in the intake forms was originally provided by victim clients and independently validated by case managers through cross-checking with court, hospital, welfare, and immigration documents. De-identified computerized records were then transferred to researchers for analysis.

Since this study adopted a correlational approach to assess the impact of acculturation, no power calculations were conducted. The identification of several statistically significant

¹ Other ethnic groups consist of Whites (14 %), Hispanics (2 %), Blacks (1 %) and other non-Asians (2.4 %).

relationships in this relatively small sample indicates that type II errors are not problematic.

Measures

The level of acculturation among immigrants was measured using legal status and English language proficiency. Many scholars have attempted to identify the factors that predict acculturation and acculturative stress among immigrants (Barry 2001; Shin and Abell 1999; Taras 2007). Some scholars have used direct measurement of acculturation using scales (Benet-Martinez 2003; Vinokurov et al. 2002) while others have used proxy variables such as English proficiency, age of immigration, or citizenship to measure the level of acculturation (Nilsson et al. 2008; Ping 2009). Although there is no agreement on the measurement of acculturation, immigrant related factors such as immigrants' legal status, language proficiency, and other socioeconomic factors, such as education, income, and occupation are strong predictors of acculturation among immigrants (Lueck and Wilson 2010; Poppitt and Frey 2007). Measures of educational level, income, and employment status reflect resources that are assumed to supplement acculturation.

Legal Status was measured by whether or not individuals had citizenship or permanent residency. In addition, a cumulative scale based on whether offenders can understand, speak, read, and write English was used to measure *English language proficiency*. If respondents said "yes" to none of four categories— understanding, speaking, reading, and writing — then the respondent's level was classed as 0, if "yes" to one of four categories then 1, and so forth. The level of English proficiency ranges from 0 to 4 in this study. Employment status (employed versus not employed), level of income (more than 2000 dollars a month versus less than 2000 dollars a month), and level of education (high school or less versus more than high school) were measured dichotomously.

Social support networks were measured through a cumulative scale based on whether respondents have access to supportive networks such as family, relatives, friends, neighbors, colleagues, church, and other. If respondents said "yes" to one of the seven categories, then the level of social network is classed as 1, and if "yes" to two categories then 2, and so forth.

Seriousness of abuse was measured through a cumulative violence scale, which was based on the number of types of violence victims had been subjected to during the time of relationship with current or previous abusers. Victims were asked to choose all types of abuse they have experienced in the past 12 months among ten different abuse categories, the weapon involvement, and the injury of victims. If victims experience more than one type of abuse, the measure of seriousness of abuse increases. The ten violence categories to measure the seriousness of violence in this dataset include: verbal, threatening, threatening with weapons, physical, physical with

weapons, sexual, economical, emotional, psychological, and stalking.

Frequency of abuse refers to how often victims were subjected to IPV regardless of the type of abuse, and it was measured as ordinal variables: sometimes, often, and too many to count. *Length of abuse* is a dichotomous variable measured by whether victims experienced violence for 3 years or less or more than 3 years.² *Type of Abuse* was categorized into three different types – physical, sexual, and emotional/psychological violence. Physical and sexual violence is a dichotomous variable which measures whether or not victims experienced physical (i.e., actual experience of physical attacks by offenders to victims) and sexual abuse (i.e., attempts or actual experience of sexual attacks by offenders to victims). Emotional/psychological abuse is victims' experience of types of abuse other than physical and sexual abuse; these include verbal, threatening, economical, emotional, and psychological abuse, which do not have any actual physical or sexual violence done to victims but contain an emotional or psychological component. All other types of abuse were combined. By looking at each different type of abuse, this study examined whether there is a relationship between acculturation and type of abuse.

We conducted a multicollinearity test among variables. Our Durbin-Watson statistic is over the 1.6 threshold (1.753). In addition, since the Tolerance and the VIF score of all independent variables is greater than 0.1 and less than 10, there was no evidence of multicollinearity among the variables.

Results

Seriousness, Frequency, and Length of Abuse

Table 1 shows results for the seriousness, frequency, and length of abuse committed by Chinese immigrant men. Ordinary least squares (OLS) was used to examine the seriousness of abuse and emotional/psychological abuse. Ordered logistic regression was utilized to examine frequency of abuse. Bivariate logistic regression was used to examine the length of abuse and type of abuse. Characteristics of victims that might play a role in IPV victimization—including victim's SES, English language proficiency, legal status, as well as level of social support—were

² The length of abuse was originally constructed by GOH as a 10-category ordinal variable (ranging from 1 month to 5 years) with a large variation in the length of time. This non-equidistant progression of values rendered a meaningful analysis of the information impossible. Thus, we transformed the measure into a binary that breaks up the sample into two comparable halves. This re-coding allows an easy and meaningful reading of the coefficients.

Table 1 Acculturation, socioeconomic status and seriousness, frequency and length of abuse

Measures	Seriousness		Frequency			Length		
	b	SE	b	SE	OR	b	SE	OR
Offender's characteristics								
Abuser's English Ability	0.06	(0.09)	-0.08	(0.12)	0.93	0.13	(0.13)	1.14
Abuser's Employment	1.01**	(0.43)	-0.45	(0.51)	0.64	-0.96	(0.63)	0.39
Abuser's Income (>2 K/month)	-0.44	(0.37)	-0.48	(0.44)	0.62	0.06	(0.50)	1.09
Abuser's Education (>High School)	1.40***	(0.39)	0.40	(0.49)	1.49	-1.42***	(0.56)	0.25
Abuser's Stable Legal Status	-0.09	(0.39)	-0.58	(0.49)	0.55	0.20	(0.51)	1.23
Victim's characteristics								
Victim's Support Network	-0.01	(0.24)	-0.22	(0.30)	0.81	-0.31	(0.31)	0.74
Victim's English Ability	-0.23*	(0.10)	0.01	(0.12)	1.01	-0.09	(0.13)	0.92
Victim's Employment	0.59**	(0.32)	0.12	(0.38)	1.13	0.12	(0.43)	1.14
Victim's Income (>2 K/month)	-0.65	(0.51)	0.15	(0.60)	1.17	0.23	(0.70)	1.26
Victim's Education (>High School)	-0.93**	(0.34)	-0.63	(0.44)	0.53	0.68	(0.49)	1.97
Victim's Stable Legal Status	-0.79**	(0.32)	-0.30	(0.41)	0.75	1.56***	(0.47)	4.78
R-Square	0.23***							

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

included in this study to allow a better understanding of the acculturation experienced by abusers.

Abuser's English proficiency and legal status were not associated with the seriousness of abuse which is contrary to hypothesis 1—that Chinese immigrant men with lower levels of acculturation due to unstable legal status and lack of English skills are more likely to engage in more serious abuse. The level of seriousness of abuse was positively associated with the abuser's employment status and educational level. When the offender had more than a high school diploma, there was an increase of 1.40 point in the scale of IPV seriousness and when the offenders are employed, they are 1.01 points more likely to seriously abuse victims, which is also contradictory to our hypothesis.

On the other hand, when victims do not have permanent residency or citizenship, they were significantly more likely to be seriously abused by their partner. When the victim was not a citizen or a permanent resident, an increase of 0.79 was observed in the scale of IPV seriousness. When victim's English level is high, and when they have a higher educational level, they are less likely to be abused seriously. These findings particularly support hypothesis 4—that abusers are more likely to engage in serious violence when victims' dependency on their abuser increases. However, when they are employed, they are more likely to be seriously abused by offenders, which is contrary to our hypothesis. Other victim related variables such as supportive networks and income level are not associated with the seriousness of abuse.

Frequency of abuse was not associated with abusers' English proficiency, legal status, and SES. This is contrary to our Hypotheses 1 and 2, which argue that abusers with low SES, low English proficiency, and unstable legal status abuse victims

more frequently. In addition, this result did not support Hypothesis 4, which posits that victims' vulnerability to experience IPV increases as their dependency on abusers, in terms of their lack of social support, unstable legal status, and finances, increases.

The abuser's educational level was significantly and negatively correlated with the length of abuse, as expected. When the abuser's education was more than high school, the odds of offending for a longer period decreased by 75 %. However, neither abusers' English level nor legal status were related to the length of abuse which did not support hypothesis 1 that abusers with lower level of acculturation are more likely to engage in abusive behaviors for longer periods of time. Contrary to hypothesis 4, victim's stable legal status did not decrease the likelihood of lengthy violence. In other words, women with permanent residency or citizenship are more likely to be the victims of lengthy violence in this study. In addition, victims' social support networks, English ability, and SES were not related to the length of abuse victims' experience.

Types of Abuse

To understand the role of acculturation and socioeconomic status on distinct types of abuse (i.e., physical, sexual, and emotional/psychological), this study focused on the analysis of three different types of abuse committed by Chinese immigrant men. Logistic regression was utilized for physical and sexual abuse while linear regression was used for psychological abuse.

The likelihood of physical abuse decreased by 78 % when a victim's education was more than at the high school level but victims' supportive networks, English proficiency, and legal status were not related to offenders' physical abuse. In the case

of sexual abuse, when abusers had more than a high school degree and when their legal status was stable, they were more likely to sexually abuse their partners, by 3.6 times and 2.9 times respectively. Sexual victimization significantly increased when the victim lacked access to social networks such as family or friends (OR=0.46; $p < .05$), had low English proficiency (OR=0.68; $p < .01$), and received low income (OR=0.11; $p < .05$). Emotional/Psychological abuse increased when abusers' education was more than high school. None of the victims' characteristics was significantly associated with occurrence of emotional/psychological violence (Table 2).

Discussion

This study examined the impact of the level of acculturation and SES on IPV among Chinese immigrant men by using abuser's English language proficiency and legal status to measure levels of acculturation. None of our hypotheses received full support from our data analysis. Abusers who were unemployed and had lower levels of education did not abuse victims more seriously when compared with abusers who were employed and had higher levels of education. This result did not support hypothesis 1, which states that Chinese immigrant men with lower SES are more likely to engage in more serious IPV. However, it is important to look at the victim's employment status. This study shows that when the victim's employment status increased, the seriousness of abuse increased as well. In other words, abusers were more likely to abuse victims seriously when victims had the financial ability to support their family or themselves through employment. Although victims' financial independence via employment might help women to escape from an abusive

situation (Capaldi et al. 2012), it might also in some cases increase IPV victimization. Many Chinese immigrant men may feel a loss of decision-making power after immigration because of the reversal of traditional gender roles caused by the economic emancipation of women, and they may therefore attempt to compensate for their perceived power loss by abusing women (Ho 1990; Lee 1982). This finding suggests that rather than abusers' unemployment status, the employment of victims might play a more important role in the occurrence of serious IPV among Chinese immigrants in New York City as abusers might feel more frustrated by victims' financial advancement and achievement than by their unemployment status.

Our findings show that abusers with lower levels of education were more likely to engage in abuse for long periods of time. This suggests that if offenders lack resources such as education, which is closely associated with lower level of acculturation, their intimate partners are at a higher risk of chronic abuse and violence.

The contradictory finding in this study between the seriousness and the length of abuse associated with abusers' educational level can be explained by the dynamic of acculturation and acculturative stress. For instance, if abusers have a higher level of education, their frustration might be greater at the outset of immigration due to various challenges such as the loss of decision-making power. As a result, they might engage in more serious abuse but highly educated men have more resources to cope with their stress easily. Thus, they are less likely to abuse victims for longer periods of time.

Although there was some variation in the predictors of different types of abuse (i.e., physical, sexual, and emotional/psychological), a significant relationship was found between measures of acculturation and the type of abuse. We found

Table 2 Acculturation, socioeconomic status and type of abuse

Measures	Physical			Sexual			Emotional/Psychological	
	B	SE	OR	B	SE	OR	B	SE
Offender's characteristics								
Abuser's english ability	0.18	(0.13)	1.20	0.10	(0.16)	1.10	0.01	(0.07)
Abuser's employment	0.56	(0.63)	1.74	0.28	(0.76)	1.33	0.59**	(0.30)
Abuser's income (>2 K/month)	-0.61	(0.53)	1.34	0.57	(0.65)	1.77	-0.11	(0.25)
Abuser's education (> high school)	0.60	(0.57)	1.82	1.29**	(0.63)	3.63	0.55**	(0.27)
Abuser's stable legal status	-0.47	(0.58)	0.63	1.07	(0.64)	2.90	-0.09	(0.27)
Victim's characteristics								
Victim's support network	0.01	(0.31)	1.01	-0.77*	(0.44)	0.46	0.08	(0.16)
Victim's english ability	-0.19	(0.14)	0.83	-0.39**	(0.19)	0.68	-0.07	(0.07)
Victim's employment	0.40	(0.44)	1.50	1.486***	(0.56)	4.42	0.14	(0.22)
Victim's income (>2 K/month)	0.86	(0.70)	2.37	-2.20*	(1.24)	0.11	-0.35	(0.33)
Victim's education (> high school)	-1.53***	(0.53)	0.22	0.31	(0.57)	1.36	-0.05	(0.25)
Victim's stable legal status	-0.55	(0.49)	0.58	-2.06***	(0.56)	0.13	-0.38	(0.23)

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

relationships between the physical type of abuse as well as emotional/psychological type of abuse and the characteristics of offenders and victims. First, physical abuse was not significantly related to abusers' characteristics, such as their English language proficiency, legal status, and SES, while none of the victims' characteristics were significantly related to emotional/psychological type of abuse. Second, only the educational level of offenders and victims was related to the occurrence of physical and emotional/psychological types of abuse. We found that when abusers' educational level was more than high school, they were more likely to abuse victims without any physical violence involved. However, offenders were more likely to physically abuse victims when victims' educational level was less than high school. This finding implies that educational level rather than level of acculturation caused by their English ability and legal status might be an important factor for Chinese immigrant abusers and victims in terms of the types of abuse they experience. Future research on the role of the educational level of offenders and victims in different types of abuse will be necessary.

Similar to emotional/psychological abuse, sexual abuse was more likely to occur when abusers' educational level was high and their legal status was stable. It might be possible that offenders high in education and in a stable legal status use "safer methods" to abuse victims, as sexual violence (in particular by intimate partners) as well as emotional/psychological type of violence are not easily detected and are more difficult to prove when compared with physical violence (Cook and Dickens 2009).

Another important and interesting finding of this study is that when victims' vulnerability increases due to their low English language proficiency, low-income level, unstable legal status, and lack of support networks, the occurrence of IPV increases as well. This finding echoes an earlier study that noted the existence of a strong association between the victim's vulnerability and IPV (Capaldi et al. 2012). In cases of sexual abuse, when Chinese immigrant victims had low English language proficiency, low-income level, and unstable legal status, they were more likely to be victimized by their intimate partners. On the other hand, when the victims' environment was strongly supportive, with the existence of strong support networks such as friends, neighbors, and/or church members, they were less likely to be victimized.

All in all, our findings lead us to conclude that the occurrence of IPV is affected by various dimensions of acculturation among offenders and victims as well as their SES which can be related to the level of acculturation. Most studies have focused on background and situational factors related to the victims and have yielded insights on how they can escape from these abusive situations (Yick and Oomen-Early 2008). While informative, this traditional approach provides neither a comprehensive explanation of IPV occurrence nor a set of preventive methods. Although various factors other than degree of acculturation

might play an important role in occurrence of IPV among immigrants, our study helps fill the gap in research on the offender and victim characteristics as well as the interaction between in the determination and maintenance of IPV.

Limitations and Future Research

This study inevitably has some limitations. First, as this data on offender characteristics was collected from victim reports rather than from offender accounts (i.e., victims provided the offenders' information) and as the data for this study was collected and measured for administrative purposes, there are limitations of validity and reliability of the measurement of some variables. Because data were provided by a single agency, external generalizability is limited. As many other victimology studies (Schneider 1981), the findings of this study might be subject to recall bias and social desirability bias. To obtain more reliable and valid data, rather than using the administrative data, future research should conduct research on offenders and measure their offensive behaviors directly.

Second, acculturation was measured through proxy variables (i.e., indirect measurements) rather than direct measures of acculturation. Third, the sample for this study includes only offenders who committed violence; there was no comparison group that did not commit any type of violence. It is possible that a positive or negative statistical relationship exists between abuser's SES, language proficiency, and legal status, and the different types of abuse. Future studies need to look in more detail into the mechanisms which play a role in shaping these relationships among different immigrant groups and samples of non-abusers. Better measures of acculturation should be examined in further studies, including cultural attitudes, and cross-cultural approaches could be fruitful to further understand the role of acculturation.

Finally, the data for this study was collected post-immigration and there exist no comparable data on whether abusive behavior of IPV offenders began prior to immigration. Further research is required to understand changing patterns of IPV occurrence pre- and post-immigration and the role of acculturation and acculturative stress. Despite these limitations, we believe that this study sheds important light on a previously hidden side of IPV in the Chinese immigrant community, and on one of the underlying causes of IPV among Chinese immigrant men.

Policy Implications

The findings of this study suggest important but neglected issues for policy makers. Currently, most policies related to IPV are focused on legal interventions that have limited impact. For example, mandatory arrest is not consistently effective—in particular among people with low socioeconomic status (Lyengar 2009). Immigrant women are less likely to contact formal help agencies, such as the police, legal aid or shelter, because of their

social isolation, disempowerment (Sabina et al. 2012), and the fear of losing their family and financial resources (Bhuyan 2008; Murdaugh et al. 2004). Applying uniform techniques and knowledge developed to encompass all victims and offenders but which are not sensitive to the specific needs and vulnerabilities of Chinese immigrant victims and offenders overlooks important dimensions of IPV in this large and fast-growing immigrant population. Neither IPV offenders nor victims among immigrants benefit from current policies that ignore the specific needs and vulnerabilities of immigrant offenders and victims. We need to find better ways to handle IPV among immigrants – targeted interventions.

The findings of this study unravel some important aspects of acculturation related to IPV among Chinese immigrants. First, some characteristics of individuals associated with IPV might play a different role depending on the level of acculturation. For example, contrary to the findings of other studies, our analysis showed an opposite association between the seriousness and length of abuse, and the offenders’ educational level. This suggests education level might affect the occurrence of IPV differently among newly arrived immigrants compared to those who have lived a couple of years in the United States. Thus, community programs that tailor their services to the needs of Chinese immigrant men based on their stage of immigration period rather than their characteristics can help to reduce IPV among this population.

Also, the concept of acculturation and acculturative stress is a subjective matter and it is highly related to personal judgments of one’s own situation (Jin and Keat 2010). Thus, we need to look carefully not only at offenders’ objective stressors (i.e., low SES, lower level of acculturation) but also at other factors, such as economic advancement by women that might increase offenders’ subjective triggers of stress. Given the availability of evidence-based strategies to help manage marital stress—such as the Couples Coping Enhancement Training (CCET) (Bodenmann and Shantinath 2004) and stress inoculation training (Neff and Broady 2011)—helping abusive men to resolve stress associated with their level of acculturation through counseling and education may reduce reoffending.

Finally, culturally sensitive community programs that promote acculturation by helping immigrants to improve their English language skills, secure legal status, and gain employment have the potential to reduce IPV. At the same time, participating community programs will help Chinese immigrant victims to enhance their supportive networks which reduce their vulnerability to IPV and increase the formal and informal social controls over offenders. By encouraging active interaction and cooperation between immigrant communities and the host society, successful acculturation can be achieved among new immigrants without sacrificing their cultural identity, which is a known protective factor against stress (Berry 2005). Although this study is based on a sample of Chinese

immigrants, lessons learned from its findings can inform research and practices around acculturative stress in other immigrant communities.

Appendix

Table 3 Descriptive statistics for study variables (N=166)

Variables	Frequency	Mean	SD	Min	Max
Seriousness of Abuse		4.59	1.81	1.00	10.00
Frequency of Abuse		1.88	.81	1.00	3.00
Sometimes (1)	33.7 %				
Often (2)	29.5 %				
Too many to count (3)	23.5 %				
Length of Abuse		0.64	0.48	0.00	1.00
Less than 6 m to 3 years	36.1 %				
More than 3 to 15 years	63.9 %				
Type of abuse					
Physical Abuse	68.7 %				
Sexual Abuse	21.7 %				
Emotional/Psychological Abuse		3.44	1.27	0.00	6.00
Offender’s characteristics					
Abuser’s English ability		1.60	1.85	.00	4.00
Abuser’s Employment Status		0.83	0.66	0.00	1.00
Unemployed	16.5 %				
Employed	83.5 %				
Abuser’s Income		0.70	0.46	0.00	1.00
Less than 2 K / Month	29.5 %				
More than 2 K / Month	70.5 %				
Abuser’s Education		0.62	0.49	0.00	1.00
High School or less	38.1 %				
More than High School	61.9 %				
Abuser’s Legal Status		0.78	0.41	0.00	1.00
Without citizenship	21.1 %				
With citizenship	78.9 %				
Victim’s characteristics					
Victim’s Support network		1.04	0.66	0.00	3.00
Victim’s English ability		1.17	1.65	0.00	4.00
Victim’s Employment Status		0.47	0.50	0.00	1.00
Unemployed	53.4 %				
Employed	46.6 %				
Victim’s income		0.13	0.34	0.00	1.00
Less than 2 K / Month	86.7 %				
More than 2 K / Month	13.3 %				
Victim’s Education		0.54	0.50	0.00	1.00
High School or less	46.3 %				
More than High School	53.7 %				
Victim’s Legal Status		0.63	0.48	0.00	1.00
Without citizenship	36.7 %				
With citizenship	63.3 %				

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