

Domestic Violence Against Women of Japanese Descent in Los Angeles

Two Methods of Estimating Prevalence

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Using a more inclusive, culturally responsive measure, this population-based study of women of Japanese descent contrasts two methods of estimating prevalence of domestic violence. Eighty percent of respondents reported experiencing a male partner's violence during their lifetimes—a conventional estimation. A new method took into account the respondent's perceptions about the partner's acts—whether she considered her partner's behavior abusive and placed it within the context of an abusive relationship—and yielded the lifetime prevalence of 61%. Attention to culturally based manifestations of domestic violence and the respondent's perceptions provide additional dimensions of data grounded in women's subjective experiences.

Violence against women by their male intimate partners (domestic violence) knows no racial, ethnic, or class boundaries (Heise, 1994; United Nations, 1989). In the United States, studies indicate that 22% to 31% of adult women experience physical violence perpetrated by their male intimates during their lifetime (Neff, Holamon, & Schluter, 1995; Tjaden & Thoennes, 1998). Domestic violence is not limited to physical violence but includes sexual violence and a wide range of other acts used to hurt, isolate, intimidate, threaten, and control women. Due to underreporting common to survey research and limited attention to nonphysical violence in previous studies, the true extent of domestic violence

AUTHOR'S NOTE: This study was partially funded by the National Institute of Mental Health (RO3 MH54351-01). The author would like to thank the interviewers, as well as Kiyoko Fukushima and Noriko Tsukada who assisted in the translation of the research instruments and data entry. Special thanks to Arno K. Kumagai and John Nakashima for their thoughtful review of the manuscript and many valuable discussions. The author wishes to express special gratitude to the 211 women who participated in the study and countless battered women who courageously broke a web of silence and spoke candidly about their experiences with domestic violence.

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN, Vol. 5 No. 8, August 1999 869-897
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is probably much higher than these estimates. This study investigated the prevalence of domestic violence against women of Japanese descent using a more inclusive measure of and paying attention to the respondents' perceptions.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AGAINST ASIAN PACIFIC WOMEN IN THE UNITED STATES— A VOID IN THE RESEARCH

To date, no population-based study has examined the prevalence of domestic violence among women of Asian Pacific descent in the United States (Asian Pacific American women). Nevertheless, qualitative studies, case studies, and data from law enforcement, the criminal justice system, shelters, and various other social service agencies document the problem's existence (Agtuca, 1992; Dasgupta & Warriar, 1996; Ho, 1990; Song, 1986; U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 1992). For example, the Center for the Pacific Asian Family in Los Angeles, the nation's first battered women's shelter for Asian Pacific American women, receives more than 2,000 calls through its multilingual hotline and houses approximately 200 women and children each year. The actual magnitude of domestic violence against Asian Pacific American women is suspected to be far greater than the number of reported cases. Like other battered women, Asian Pacific American women may avoid contacting the police or other agencies. Furthermore, a lack of linguistic or cultural sensitivity on the part of mainstream service providers may create barriers to help-seeking, especially for women with limited English proficiency (Lai, 1986; U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 1992).

A lack of information on the true prevalence and characteristics of domestic violence among Asian Pacific American women hinders the development of appropriate intervention programs. It is this void in population-based data that this study attempts to fill. In addition, this study also hopes to improve on the general methodologies of measuring the prevalence of domestic violence. The following two perspectives have guided the development of the present study conceptually and methodologically: Studies of domestic violence should (a) consider manifestations and perceptions of domestic violence in unique sociocultural contexts and (b)

allow the woman to determine what constitutes domestic violence and its severity within her own meaning system. Generally, most studies do not take into consideration these two perspectives. The following sections provide an overview of issues in examining the prevalence of domestic violence.

METHODOLOGICAL LIMITATIONS IN ESTIMATING THE PREVALENCE OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

In the United States, prevalence rates of domestic violence have been estimated through community-based surveys (Kaufman Kantor, Jasinski, & Aldarondo, 1994; Neff et al., 1995; Schulman, 1979; Straus & Gelles, 1986; Straus & Kaufman Kantor, 1994; Tjaden & Thoennes, 1998). Most of these studies have used the Conflict Tactics Scale (CTS) (Straus, 1979). The CTS consists of behavior-specific questions that pertain to narrowly delimited specific subtypes of violence, such as slapping and choking. Compared to screening-type questions (e.g., "Have you ever experienced violence by your partner?"), behavior-specific questions are designed to reduce perceptual biases and to enhance the respondent's recall and reporting of victimization (Koss, 1992; Wyatt & Peters, 1986).

Although its wide use has allowed for cross-study comparisons of the prevalence of domestic violence, the CTS as a measure of prevalence is not free from criticisms. Its identified limitations center on its inability to capture the breadth and subjective nature of experiences of domestic violence (Dobash & Dobash, 1988; Dobash, Dobash, Wilson, & Daly, 1992; Rosenbaum, 1988; Weis, 1989). Specifically, the CTS examines the narrow range of physical and psychological aggression to the exclusion of sexual violence. The scope of investigation has been even narrower because researchers have often elected to use the Physical Aggression subscale only. In addition, the CTS does not collect contextual information about the victimization. What constitutes abuse or its severity is predetermined by the researchers.

Modifications to the CTS by various researchers (Dutton, Hohnerker, Halle, & Burghardt, 1994; Saunders, 1994; Smith, 1987), as well as the recent revision (CTS2) of the CTS by its original author (Straus, Hamby, Boney-McCoy, & Sugarman, 1996), have addressed many of these criticisms. Items pertaining to a wider

range of physical, emotional, and sexual violence have been added, and general item construction has improved. In addition, a number of other measures have also been developed to examine a wider range, or a specific type, of domestic violence (Attala, Hudson, & McSweeney, 1994; Gondolf, 1987; Hudson & McIntosh, 1981; Kasian & Painter, 1992; Marshall, 1992; Shepard & Campbell, 1992; Tolman, 1989). Despite these measurement improvements over the years, two major limitations remain unaddressed: (a) lack of attention to women's subjective perceptions and (b) lack of attention to sociocultural contexts.

Lack of Attention to Women's Subjective Perceptions

The CTS and other measures of domestic violence typically assess the type and frequency of predetermined types of violence experienced or perpetrated. (*The Measure of Wife Abuse* [Rodenburg & Fantuzzo, 1993] and *The Women's Experience With Battering Scale* [Smith, Earp, & DeVellis, 1995] are notable exceptions in that they elicit the respondent's perceptions about the violence.) Without attention to the specific context in which violence was perpetrated, the severity of each specific violent behavior is predetermined. For example, certain forms of violence (kicking, biting, and hitting with a fist) are predetermined as "severe violence" in the CTS based on the assumption that they entail "a greater risk of injury" (Straus, 1990). This approach fails to take into consideration various situational factors such as outcomes (e.g., injury), a woman's prior experience of domestic violence by the same or a different partner, and the range of available options to ensure her safety. These factors influence the degree of severity a woman may attribute to a given incident of domestic violence.¹ Ideally, an instrument must incorporate the women's meaning system, particularly women's own perceptions of a partner's violence in its specific situational context.

Lack of Attention to Sociocultural Context

Another methodological problem is a lack of attention to the sociocultural context of incidents of domestic violence. Particularly problematic is the application of standardized measures,

which have been developed based on the experience of women in general, to studies of women of color without consideration of sociocultural variations. What is considered domestic violence or a specific meaning a woman may give to her partner's act is partly based on the individual's viewpoint shaped by her sociocultural background (Family Violence Prevention Fund, 1993; Torres, 1991; Wyatt, 1994; Yoshihama & Sorenson, 1994). For example, in a recent nationwide study of domestic violence in Japan (Yoshihama & Sorenson, 1994), many respondents considered their partner's overturning the dining table—a symbol of a woman's legitimate role and place in the family predicated on rigid sex-role division of labor—as abusive. Many women in the same study regarded a partner's noncompliance with contraception as a form of domestic violence and reported unwanted pregnancies and abortions as a result. This phenomenon reflects current drug regulations in Japan that restrict the availability of oral contraceptive pills. In addition, women in Japan reported other forms of domestic violence seemingly unique to the culture, such as being doused with liquid—an act commonly interpreted as purifying something impure or contaminated.² The use of standardized measures would fail to detect such socioculturally based manifestations and nuances of domestic violence. Clearly, more culturally relevant investigations of domestic violence that incorporate women's meaning systems and their unique sociocultural contexts are needed.

METHOD

Due to the enormous cultural and linguistic diversity among various subgroups of Asian Pacific American populations, this investigation focused on a single cultural group: women of Japanese descent in the United States—one of the largest and oldest Asian Pacific subgroups in this country. The study sought to elucidate a fuller spectrum of women's experiences of domestic violence in this previously understudied population by including potentially culturally based manifestations of domestic violence in the investigation. The study also took into consideration women's subjective perceptions about the violence.

SAMPLING METHOD AND PROCEDURES

This investigation employed a community-based random sample of women of Japanese descent in Los Angeles. The data presented in this article are part of a larger study that investigated the prevalence, sociocultural context, and mental health consequences of domestic violence and other types of victimization, such as sexual assault and harassment, racial harassment, and street violence (Yoshihama, 1996). In addition to approval from the Institutional Review Board, a Certificate of Confidentiality was obtained from the National Institute of Mental Health, Department of Health and Human Services.

An introductory letter was sent to approximately 1,000 households in Los Angeles County that were randomly selected from a list of households containing persons with Japanese surnames compiled by a marketing research company. Due to safety concerns, the letter described the topic of the study as "interpersonal conflicts experienced by women of Japanese descent" and emphasized that receipt of the letter was the result of random selection and did not reflect any prior contact with outside agencies by the woman or anyone else. Only after a prospective respondent was identified during telephone screening was the study topic explicated as women's experiences of domestic violence. At least five attempts were made to contact each household to identify a prospective respondent who met the following criteria: Japanese descent, born in the United States or Japan, age 18 to 49, and having had an intimate heterosexual relationship. If more than one woman in a given household met the criteria, a random procedure was used to select a prospective respondent. During the phone screening, the interviewers took precautionary measures to minimize the possibility that phone contact might place the prospective respondent at risk of abuse by a partner (e.g., repeatedly asking whether she felt safe and comfortable in discussing her participation in the study and offering to call back at a more convenient time). If the prospective respondent agreed to participate, she was asked to select a date, time, and location for the interview that allowed for privacy and safety.

Respondents were interviewed face-to-face by trained interviewers who were matched to the respondent's preferred language (English or Japanese). At the beginning of the interview,

the purpose and procedure of the study, potential risks, the participant's rights, and the limitation of confidentiality (e.g., the need to report suspected child abuse) were explained both verbally and in writing; a written consent was signed by first name only. The interview was audiotaped if the respondent consented (67% of the cases). The average length of an interview was 90 minutes. At the end of the interview, the respondent received \$20 and a list of available assistance programs, including those services provided in Japanese. All respondents were also asked whether they wished to speak to a counselor. If a respondent requested assistance or appeared in great distress, a referral for counseling was made in coordination with the interviewer and the principal investigator (author), who was available by pager.

QUESTIONNAIRE DEVELOPMENT AND MEASURES

To ensure that the Japanese and English versions of the study instrument were comparable, culturally relevant, conceptually meaningful, and linguistically sound, the questionnaire was developed using a decentering method (Marin & Marin, 1991). This method involved developing a questionnaire in two languages simultaneously, followed by a series of translation and back-translation between the two versions as revisions were made to either language version. This process was aided by item-by-item reviews from practitioners, researchers, and graduate students in social work and by pilot tests with a convenience sample of 21 women of Japanese descent in Los Angeles.

In developing the measures of domestic violence, efforts were made to address methodological limitations of previous studies. A new and expanded set of behavior-specific questions were used to assess not only a wider range of physical violence than most previous studies but also a spectrum of nonphysical violence. As suggested previously, domestic violence may manifest itself differently depending on the sociocultural context. The present study was preceded by a series of investigations into the ways in which domestic violence is manifested and perceived among women of Japanese descent in both Japan and the United States (Yoshihama, 1993; Yoshihama & Sorenson, 1994). The forms of violence identified by women in Japan (e.g., a partner's throwing liquid or overturning a dining table) were added to the measure

after a pilot test found that these were also experienced by women of Japanese descent in Los Angeles. Additional types of domestic violence were drawn from multiple sources, such as previous studies (Follingstad, Rutledge, Berg, Hause, & Polek, 1990; Koss, Gidycz, & Wisniewski, 1987; Marshall, 1992; Straus & Gelles, 1986; Tolman, 1989), consultation with practitioners and advocates in both Japan and the United States, and the author's own practice with battered women of Japanese descent.

To assist respondents' recollection, behavior-specific questions were organized into three general groupings: emotional (21 items), physical (31 items), and sexual violence³ (11 items). (This categorization, however, does not imply that these acts are conceptually, behaviorally, or phenomenologically separate.) The respondents were asked whether they experienced each specific type of violence by their current or a former male intimate partner during their lifetime. The internal consistency Cronbach's alpha was .82 for emotional violence items and physical violence items and .64 for sexual violence items. In addition, the respondents were asked whether they experienced any other forms of domestic violence that were not covered by the behavior-specific questions.

Physical Violence

To allow for cross-study comparison, all forms of physical violence covered in the CTS (Straus & Gelles, 1986) were included. Efforts were made, however, to improve CTS item construction by separating original CTS items that contained different acts of violence (e.g., kicking, biting, or hitting with a fist) into separate items, each of which contained a single form of violence. Attempted and completed acts of violence were also differentiated. Other forms of physical violence assessed included pinning down, throwing liquid at, overturning a dining table, stomping on, pulling hair, dragging around, lifting up and throwing, and burning.

Emotional Violence

Types of emotional violence assessed encompassed verbal abuse and debasement (3 items), restriction of activities (5 items), withholding affection (4 items), other threatening behaviors (5 items), and control over household tasks and financial neglect (4 items).

Only those respondents who had ever shared household finances with a male partner were asked about their experiences with the last category.

Sexual Violence

Types of sexual violence measured included forced intercourse involving varying degrees of coercion and other forms of unwanted sexual acts (e.g., grouping, having photos/videos taken during sex, unwanted use of sex toys/foreign objects). An additional question examined whether the respondent's partner had refused contraceptive use, based on findings from a study in Japan (Yoshihama & Sorenson, 1994) and elsewhere (Heise, 1993).

The Severity and Other Dimensions of Domestic Violence

A distinctive aspect of this study was the centrality of women's subjective perceptions in determining the meaning of partners' violence. Thus, the severity of domestic violence was assessed by directly inquiring about the respondents' own perceptions. Specifically, for each type of violence ever experienced, the respondent was asked to indicate its perceived abusiveness on a 4-point Likert-type scale,⁴ ranging from 1 (*not at all abusive*) to 4 (*very abusive*).

The respondent was also asked whether she had been injured as a result of domestic violence during her lifetime. In addition, the respondent was asked to identify and describe an incident or pattern of a partner's acts that she considered the most abusive. This variable, "most abusive incident or pattern," was used as a criterion for a new method of estimating the prevalence of domestic violence (see Analysis section).

The respondent's sociodemographic information, as well as selective characteristics of the respondent's partner, were also obtained.

ANALYSIS

The completion (response) rate was calculated by dividing the number of respondents who participated in the study by those prospective respondents who had been contacted and met the sampling eligibility criteria (Council of American Survey

Research Organizations [CASRO], 1982). The respondents' characteristics were examined using descriptive statistics. Representativeness of the respondents was assessed by comparing their characteristics to 1990 census data on the Japanese/Japanese American female population age 18 to 49 in Los Angeles County using chi-square statistics. The frequency and proportion of women who experienced specific types of domestic violence and mean scores of perceived abusiveness rated by the respondents for specific types of violence were calculated. Due to small sample sizes, no statistical tests were conducted.

The prevalence of domestic violence was calculated by the following two methods.

Method 1. Prevalence was determined by calculating the proportion of respondents who reported one or more forms of violence. This is the conventional approach of estimating the prevalence of domestic violence in almost all studies, including those using the CTS.

Method 2. This study proposes a new approach to estimating the prevalence of domestic violence. As in Method 1, the respondent must report some form of violence perpetrated by a male partner. Two additional criteria were added, however. First, the respondent must consider at least one of the violent acts experienced as *somewhat abusive* or *very abusive* on the 4-point severity scale mentioned previously. Second, the respondent must indicate that the abusive act took place in the context of an abusive relationship. This criterion was determined during the interview in the following manner: If a respondent said she experienced a violent act and considered it somewhat or very abusive, she was asked to identify and describe an incident (or an ongoing pattern, if referring to nondiscrete abusive acts) that she considered the most abusive (see Figure 1). The identification of "the most abusive incident or pattern" was viewed as an indicator of an abusive relationship.

This new multicriteria method for measuring domestic violence took into consideration a woman's own perceptions and meaning system. The respondent was given the opportunity to reflect on the context in which the act took place in determining the meaning of a partner's act.

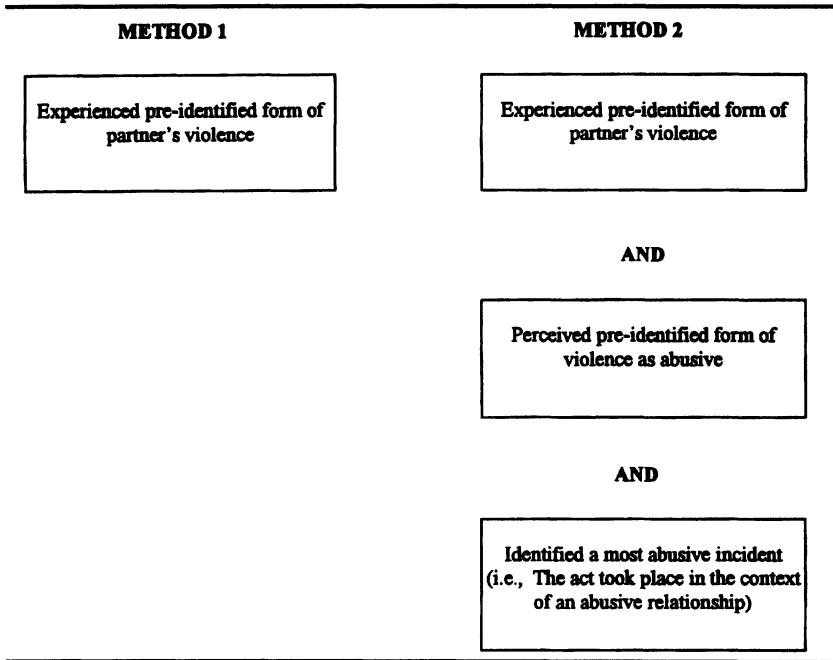


Figure 1: Two methods of estimating the prevalence of domestic violence

RESULTS

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE RESPONDENTS

Of the 1,053 randomly-selected households, 796 (76%) were contacted by the end of the project, of which 407 were determined to have at least one eligible woman. A total of 211 women completed the interview, a response rate of 52%. Demographically, the respondents were not significantly different from nonparticipants, except that the respondents (mean age 37.2) were younger than nonparticipants (mean age 40.6). The majority of respondents were married and working at the time of the interview (see Table 1). Twenty-two percent of the respondents' current partners and 43% of the partners at the time of the most abusive incident were of non-Japanese descent. In general, the respondents had high levels of education and household income. However, nearly half reported personal incomes under \$20,000. One fourth of the respondents (27%) were born in Japan, with the average

TABLE 1
Respondents' Characteristics and Comparison With the General Population of Women of Japanese Descent in Los Angeles County^a

	<i>Respondents (N = 211)</i> n (%)	<i>General Population</i> %
Age*		
≤ 29	52 (24.6)	34.4
30-39	46 (21.8)	39.3
40 and over	113 (53.6)	26.3
Marital status		
Married	128 (60.7)	54.8
Separated/divorced	13 (6.2)	7
Never married	70 (33.2)	37.9
Widowed	— (—)	0.4
Employment status		
Working full-time	118 (55.9)	47.4
Working part-time	46 (21.8)	17
Not working	47 (22.3)	35.7
Education		
≤ High school diploma	24 (11.4)	5.6
Some postsecondary education	79 (37.4)	46.9
College graduate	108 (51.2)	47.6
Personal income*	[n = 210]	
< \$ 20,000	102 (48.6)	58.5
\$20,000 and over	108 (51.4)	41.5
Household income*	[n = 201]	
< \$60,000	74 (36.8)	55.6
\$60,000 and over	127 (63.2)	44.4
Country of birth		
United States	154 (73.0)	60.8
Japan	57 (27.0)	39.2

a. Women of Japanese descent age 18 to 49 in Los Angeles County who were born in the United States or Japan, according to the 1990 census (California Public Use Microdata 5%).
 * < .05.

length of stay in the United States being 19 years. The respondents were comparable to the general population of women of Japanese descent age 18 to 49 (at the 1990 census) in Los Angeles County born in the United States or Japan, except that women with higher personal and household incomes were overrepresented in this study.⁵

EXPERIENCES OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Table 2 indicates the proportion of respondents who experienced specific forms of partners' violence during their lifetime.

Respondents in this study experienced a wide range of violence by their current or former male partners.

Physical Violence

One in five women reported experiencing a partner's grabbing and pushing. Other forms of direct physical violence included threatening to hit with a hand (13%), pinning down (8%), slapping (6%), hitting with a fist (4%), twisting arms (4%), kicking (3%), lifting and throwing body (2%), attempting to choke (2%), choking (1%), and dragging around (1%). One fourth of respondents reported a partner's reckless driving, and another 16% destruction of property, such as a wall or a door. Two women reported being hit by objects and one reported being threatened with a gun. Objects (9%) and liquid (3%), such as water and other cold drinks, were thrown at respondents. Seventeen respondents reported being physically injured at least once, and eight suffered injuries multiple times.

Emotional Violence

Verbal debasement, such as being called names, sworn at, or put down, was frequently reported (48%). Verbal debasement was sometimes directed at the respondent's family or friends (28%). Some male partners attempted to restrict the respondents' activities in various ways, such as limiting contact with family and friends (18%), making an accusation of paying too much attention to other people or things (38%), and prohibiting respondents from going to work or school (8%). One in nine women reported having a partner who monitored her activities (e.g., listening to phone calls, opening correspondence without permission, checking the mileage on the car, calling repeatedly at work or at home, or stalking). Fifteen percent had a partner who deprived them of sleep, showed little caring during sickness or pregnancy, or withheld information, such as his whereabouts or source of income. Verbal threats of physical violence were directed not only at the respondent (6%) but also at family and friends (2%). Other threatening behaviors included destruction of the respondent's important possessions (14%) and abuse toward pets (4%). Of the 152 respondents who had ever shared a

(text continues on p. 885)

TABLE 2
 Respondents' Lifetime Experiences of Partners' Violence and the Perceived Abusiveness

	Lifetime Experience		Perceived Abusiveness				Mean ^b
	N = 211 n (%)	Not at All % ^a	Not So Abusive % ^a	Somewhat Abusive % ^a	Very Abusive % ^a		
Physical violence							
Locked her in the house or a room	2 (.9)	—	—	50.0	50.0	3.50	
Locked her out of the house	8 (3.8)	25.0	—	50.0	25.0	2.75	
Overturnd a dining table/knocked over food	16 (7.6)	6.3	6.3	50.0	37.5	3.19	
Broke things, such as a wall or door	33 (15.6)	15.2	18.2	30.3	36.4	2.88	
Drove recklessly to scare her	52 (24.6)	5.8	21.2	38.5	34.6	3.02	
Threw something at her	18 (8.5)	11.1	5.6	44.4	38.9	3.11	
Threw liquid at her	7 (3.3)	14.3	—	28.6	57.1	3.29	
Bit her	1 (.5)	100	—	—	—	1.00	
Pulled her hair	8 (3.8)	12.5	12.5	37.5	37.5	3.00	
Grabbed her	40 (19.0)	7.5	5.0	40.0	47.5	3.28	
Twisted her arms	9 (4.3)	22.2	11.1	33.3	33.3	2.78	
Pushed her away/shoved her	40 (19.0)	10.0	12.5	35.0	42.5	3.10	
Pinned her down	17 (8.1)	5.9	5.9	29.4	58.8	3.41	
Threatened to hit her with hand [N = 210]	28 (13.3)	10.7	3.6	28.6	57.1	3.32	
Slapped her	13 (6.2)	—	7.7	12.5	61.5	3.54	
Hit her with a fist	8 (3.8)	12.5	—	30.8	75.0	3.50	
Kicked her	7 (3.3)	—	—	12.5	100	4.00	
Stomped on her	1 (.5)	—	—	—	100	4.00	
Lifted her up and threw her	4 (1.9)	25.0	25.0	—	50.0	2.75	
Dragged her around	2 (.9)	—	50.0	—	50.0	3.00	
Beat her up	0	—	—	—	—	—	
Attempted to choke or strangle her	4 (1.9)	25.0	25.0	25.0	25.0	2.50	

Actually choked or strangled her	2 (.9)	—	—	—	100	4.00
Attempted to smother her	1 (.5)	—	100	—	—	3.00
Threatened her with an object	2 (.9)	—	50.0	50.0	50.0	3.50
Actually hit her with an object	2 (.9)	50.0	—	50.0	50.0	2.50
Threatened her with a gun	1 (.5)	—	—	100	100	4.00
Actually shot her with a gun	0	—	—	—	—	—
Threatened her with a knife	0	—	—	—	—	—
Actually cut or stabbed her with a knife	0	—	—	—	—	—
Burned her (e.g., with a lit cigarette)	0	—	—	—	—	—
Emotional violence						
Called her names /put her down/ swore at her	102 (48.3)	7.8	32.4	38.2	21.6	2.74
Called her family or friends names or put them down	58 (27.5)	15.5	31.0	27.6	25.9	2.64
Forced her to do a humiliating thing	3 (1.4)	—	—	—	100	4.00
Accused her of paying too much attention to other people/things	81 (38.4)	22.2	39.5	28.4	9.9	2.26
Restricted her contact with her family/friends	38 (18.0)	10.5	39.5	26.3	23.7	2.63
Stopped/tried to stop her from going to work/school	16 (7.6)	18.8	25.0	18.8	37.5	2.75
Excessively checked up her activities and whereabouts	23 (10.9)	8.7	30.4	47.8	13.0	2.65
Took/destroyed her IDs or passport	2 (.9)	—	—	—	100	4.00
Sulked/refused to talk for a long time	80 (37.9)	16.3	25.0	42.5	16.3	2.59
Deprived her of sleep (N = 210)	31 (14.8)	35.5	29.0	25.8	9.7	2.10
Showed little caring during illness/pregnancy	31 (14.7)	29.0	19.4	25.8	25.8	2.48
Withheld his whereabouts/source of income	32 (15.2)	15.6	31.3	34.4	18.8	2.56
Verbally threatened to harm her physically	13 (6.2)	7.7	7.7	23.1	61.5	3.39
Verbally threatened to harm her family/friends	4 (1.9)	—	—	25.0	75.0	3.75
Threatened to break up with her	30 (14.2)	13.3	20.0	33.3	33.3	2.87
Destroyed her important possessions	30 (14.2)	6.9 ^c	13.8 ^c	41.4 ^c	37.9 ^c	3.10
Abused her pet	8 (3.8)	— ^d	14.3 ^d	42.9 ^d	42.9 ^d	3.29
Became upset when meals/housework were not done his way (N = 151 ^e)	32 (21.2)	25.0	28.1	37.5	9.4	2.31
Did not contribute financially (N = 152 ^f)	31 (20.4)	25.8	19.4	32.3	22.6	2.52

(continued)

TABLE 2 continued
 Respondents' Lifetime Experiences of Partners' Violence and the Perceived Abusiveness

	Lifetime Experience		Perceived Abusiveness				Mean ^b
	N = 211 n (%)	Not at All % ^a	Not So Abusive % ^a	Somewhat Abusive % ^a	Very Abusive % ^a		
Acted irresponsibly with money (N = 152 ^c)	32 (21.1)	18.8	31.3	28.1	21.9	2.53	
Did not let her have money for her own use (N = 152 ^c)	9 (5.9)	22.2	22.2	22.2	33.3	2.67	
Sexual violence							
Verbally pressured her to have sex	24 (11.4)	16.7	4.2	29.2	50.0	3.13	
Forced her to have sex when her judgment was impaired (e.g., asleep, drunk, drugged)	11 (5.2)	27.3	—	36.4	36.4	2.82	
Forced her to have sex by physical force	9 (4.3)	—	—	11.1	88.9	3.89	
Forced her to have sex when other people may hear/see	4 (1.9)	25.0	25.0	50.0	—	2.25	
Touched her body against her will	26 (12.3)	23.1	11.5	46.2	19.2	2.62	
Forced her to touch his genitals	14 (6.6)	7.1	21.4	35.7	35.7	3.00	
Took pictures or videos of sexual nature against her will	1 (.5)	—	—	—	100	4.00	
Used sex toys/foreign objects against her will	1 (.5)	—	—	100	—	3.00	
Infected her with an STD	5 (2.4)	20.0	—	40.0	40.0	3.00	
Refused to use contraceptives	15 (7.1)	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	
Criticized/humiliated her about sex	15 (7.1)	6.7	26.7	33.3	33.3	2.93	

NOTE: STD = Sexually transmitted disease.

a. Percentage is based on the number of women who have experienced each act during their lifetime.

b. Measured on a 4-point Likert-type scale: 1 = not at all abusive, 2 = not so abusive, 3 = somewhat abusive, and 4 = very abusive.

c. Percentage is based on 29 of 30 who provided the perceived abusiveness of this form of violence.

d. Percentage is based on 7 of 8 who provided the perceived abusiveness of this form of violence.

e. 151 of 152 women who have ever shared household finances with their partner responded to this item.

household with a partner, one fifth reported having a partner who became upset when the meals or housework were not done the way he wanted, spent money irresponsibly, or failed to contribute to the household financially. Nine women (6%) reported that a partner did not let the respondent have money for her own use.

Sexual Violence

Respondents in this study reported unwanted sexual contact of various types in intimate relationships during their lifetime. One in nine respondents had been verbally coerced to have sex by a male intimate partner. Some had been forced to have intercourse when asleep, drunk, drugged, or when judgment was otherwise impaired (5%), through the use of physical violence (4%), or when they were concerned that people around them might see or hear (2%). Approximately one in eight women experienced unwanted touching by a partner, and 7% had been forced to touch a partner's genitals. One woman said that her partner took pictures or videos against her will during sex, and another reported unwanted use of sex toys or foreign objects. A number of women reported partners' acts that threatened their reproductive health. Fifteen (7%) experienced a partner's refusing to use contraception, four of whom became pregnant as a result. Five women were infected with a sexually transmitted disease by a partner.

PERCEIVED ABUSIVENESS

As indicated in Table 2, there were significant variations in the degree of perceived abusiveness across different types of violence, as well as among individuals who experienced the same act. Nearly half of all acts were perceived as at least somewhat abusive (mean abusiveness of 3.0 or higher). Unanimously considered as very abusive were being kicked, stomped on, choked, threatened with a gun, forced to do a humiliating thing, having identification cards destroyed, and having pictures or videos of a sexual nature taken. The majority of respondents who were slapped, subjected to verbal threats of violence toward family or friends, or forced to have sex by physical force perceived these acts as very abusive. By contrast, being bitten, being deprived of sleep, being accused of paying too much attention to other people

or things, or the partner's disapproval of her housework were considered not so abusive or not at all abusive by most respondents. The perceived abusiveness of various types of forced sexual intercourse varied. Forced sex by use of physical force was rated highest (mean abusiveness of 3.9), followed by forced sex by verbal coercion (mean abusiveness of 3.1). Perceived abusiveness was lower for being forced to have sex when judgment was impaired (2.8) and when other people might see (2.3).

The forms of violence classified as "severe" in the CTS (e.g., kicking, biting, hitting with a fist, trying to hit or hitting with an object, and choking) were generally rated higher than those classified as "minor" in the CTS (e.g., throwing an object, grabbing, pushing, and slapping). However, for a small number of respondents, what is considered "severe" in the CTS (e.g., biting, hitting with a fist, hitting with an object) was not abusive at all. Notably, certain forms of violence that were reported as abusive in a previous study of women in Japan were rated high: The mean perceived abusiveness was 3.2 for overturning a dining table and 3.3 for throwing liquid.

THE PREVALENCE OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

The proportions of women who experienced any form of violence, as well as physical, emotional, and sexual violence, were calculated separately. In addition, for the purpose of cross-study comparison, the proportion of respondents who reported experiencing one or more forms of physical violence normally assessed by the CTS (CTS-equivalent rate) was also computed (see Table 3). All rates were calculated using the two methods described previously.

Method 1

Based on the conventional method used by most studies, 169, or 80% of respondents, experienced some form of violence by intimate male partners during their lifetime. More than half of the respondents (52%) experienced physical violence during their lifetime. The CTS-equivalent rate of physical violence was 34%. Emotional violence was prevalent; it was experienced by three fourths of respondents during their lifetimes. The rate of lifetime sexual violence victimization was 30%.

TABLE 3
The Lifetime Prevalence of Physical, Emotional, and Sexual Violence Based on Two Different Methods (N = 211)

	<i>Method 1</i> n (%)	<i>Method 2</i> n (%)
Any violence	169 (80.1)	129 (61.1)
Physical violence	109 (51.7)	84 (39.8)
CTS-equivalent physical violence ^a	71 (33.6)	56 (26.5)
Emotional violence	160 (75.8)	107 (50.7)
Sexual violence	63 (29.9)	43 (20.4)

NOTE: CTS = Conflict Tactics Scale.

a. Based on the 17 types of physical violence included in the CTS Physical Aggression subscale: threw something, pushed/shoved, grabbed, slapped, kicked, bit, hit with a fist, attempted to hit with something, hit with something, beat up, attempted to choke, choked, attempted to smother, threatened with a knife, threatened with a gun, cut or stabbed with a knife, and shot with a gun.

Method 2

Not all the respondents who reported experiencing predetermined forms of partners' violence considered them abusive. As previously discussed, the study's new method of estimating prevalence requires the respondent to perceive an act as abusive within the context of an abusive relationship. Using these additional criteria, 129, or 61%, reported experiencing some form of partner's violence during their lifetime. Similar to this, the proportion of women who experienced physical violence during their lifetime was 40%, and the CTS-equivalent rate was 27%.

According to Method 2, half of the respondents experienced emotional violence, and one in five women experienced sexual violence during their lifetime.

DISCUSSION

THE PREVALENCE OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND WOMEN'S PERCEPTIONS

Using conventional estimation criteria (Method 1), this population-based study found that 80% of women had experienced some form of violence by a partner during their lifetime, an alarmingly high rate. Premised on a recognition of women's subjective experiences in their unique situational context, this study used additional criteria—considering a partner's violence

abusive and placing it in the context of an abusive relationship (see Figure 1, Method 2). Using this new method, this study found that 61% had experienced domestic violence during their lifetime. The use of additional criteria is grounded in the way the respondents themselves described their experiences of partner's violence: Not all women considered preidentified acts abusive. Thus, the decrease in the rate using the new method may reflect a more realistic estimation of domestic violence and points to the limitation of existing methods that focus on the type and frequency of predetermined acts of violence without incorporating the women's meaning system. Even using the more restrictive criteria, the rate of domestic violence victimization is alarmingly high.

Using a more inclusive, culturally responsive measure of domestic violence, this study found that women of Japanese descent in the United States experienced those forms of domestic violence rooted in the Japanese sociocultural context. The importance of paying attention to the women's meaning system was also illustrated by individual variations found in the perceived abusiveness when the respondents were directly asked how abusive they perceived partners' acts. This finding challenges the use of a predetermined severity rating, such as the conventionally used "severe-minor" classification system used in the CTS. In sum, the study's particular attention to culturally different manifestations of domestic violence and the respondent's own perceptions regarding abusiveness provided additional dimensions of data grounded in women's lived experiences.

THE PREVALENCE OF PHYSICAL VIOLENCE: CROSS-STUDY COMPARISONS

Table 4 provides the prevalence rates of domestic violence found in other population-based studies in the United States. Comparisons are made between prevalence rates of physical violence from this study and others using the conventional estimation method (Method 1) because most studies do not include rates of emotional and sexual violence or do not take into consideration the respondents' subjective experiences. The lifetime prevalence of physical violence found in this study, 52%, is higher than that found in the previous population-based studies in the United States (13% to 31%) (Neff et al., 1995; Nisonoff & Bitman, 1979;

TABLE 4
The Lifetime Prevalence of Domestic Violence Against Women in the United States

<i>Authors</i>	<i>N^a</i>	<i>Data Collection Method^b</i>	<i>Type of Violence^c</i>	<i>Prevalence^d</i>
Straus, 1977-1978;				
Straus et al., 1980	1,183	F	P-CTS	28 ^e
Nisonoff & Bitman, 1979	185	T	P-h	12.7
Schulman, 1979	1,793	T	P-CTS	21
Straus & Gelles, 1986;				
Straus, 1991	3,002	T	P-CTS	30 ^e
Teske & Parker, 1983	1,210	M	Any	29.7
Sorenson & Telles, 1991	2,392 ^f	F	P-h/t	21.2 ^{f, g}
Neff et al., 1995	772	F	P-CTS	30.9
Michigan Dept. of Community Health, 1997	1,848	T	P+S	38 ^g
Tjaden & Thoennes, 1998	8,000	T	P-CTS	22.1

a. The number of female respondents, unless otherwise specified.

b. F = face-to-face interview; M = mail questionnaire; T = telephone interview.

c. P = physical violence; P-h = hitting; P-h/t = hitting and throwing things; P-CTS = physical violence examined through CTS; S = sexual violence.

d. The unadjusted proportion of female respondents who reported experiencing violence, unless otherwise specified.

e. The proportion of couples in which one or both parties perpetrated violence against the partner.

f. The number of women and men (no gender-specific data on physical violence were reported). Prevalence rates by ethnicity and the country of birth were 12.8% for foreign-born respondents of Mexican descent, 30.9% for U.S.-born respondents of Mexican descent, and 21.6% for non-Hispanic White respondents.

g. Weighted to the total population.

Schulman, 1979; Straus, 1977-1978; Teske & Parker, 1983; Tjaden & Thoennes, 1998). The CTS-equivalent rate (34%) found in this study is more comparable to, albeit still higher than, the rate obtained with the CTS in other studies.

The high rate of physical violence in this study may be due to its broader scope of investigation, which encompassed not only a wider range of physical, emotional, and sexual violence than that covered by the CTS but also socioculturally based manifestations of violence (e.g., throwing liquid and overturning the dining table) based on previous studies of women of Japanese descent. The higher prevalence rates found in this study suggest that standardized measures may fail to detect certain types of domestic violence, some of which are culturally rooted.

Self-selection bias—for example, a higher rate of nonparticipation by those who have not experienced domestic violence because they believe that they have nothing or little to contribute—may

also be at work. The fact that this type of self-selection bias is common to other studies, however, makes it unlikely to explain the difference found in the reported rates of physical violence. Another possible explanation for this study's high prevalence rates might be history effects. This study was conducted in Los Angeles and overlapped the highly publicized trial of O. J. Simpson. An increased level of awareness of domestic violence by the general public during this period may have facilitated the respondents' ability and willingness to recall, identify, and report a partner's violence. Thus, this study represents one of the few instances where, by promoting respondents' awareness and reflection, history effects may have actually enhanced the validity of the study results.

SIGNIFICANCE AND LIMITATIONS OF THE PRESENT STUDY

This study expands the current knowledge base on domestic violence by examining a previously understudied ethnic minority group. A distinct strength of this study is its new approach in conceptualizing and measuring women's experience of domestic violence. Unlike previous studies that have focused on whether women experienced predetermined types of physical violence, this study sought to elucidate women's experiences of a wide range of partners' abusive acts while taking into account women's own perceptions of abusiveness. An additional strength of this study is its methodological paradigm of studying women's experiences of domestic violence by considering the sociocultural variations in the way domestic violence is manifested and perceived. Women of Japanese descent in the United States not only reported experiencing certain forms of violence that had been previously identified by women in Japan but also rated some of them as highly abusive (e.g., overturning a dining table and throwing liquid). This finding underscores the critical importance of paying attention to respondents' meaning systems.

The present study has its limitations. Like previous studies of domestic violence, the use of a cross-sectional and retrospective design is likely to suffer from vague, faulty, or incomplete recall (Arias & Beach, 1987; Rosenbaum, 1988; Weis, 1989). To minimize such potential measurement imprecision, behavior-specific questions were used to promote a more accurate and complete

recollection of the respondents' experiences with victimization. Furthermore, the use of face-to-face interviews by trained female interviewers, who were of the same or similar ethnic origin as the respondents and were matched to the respondents' primary language, was believed to have prompted rapport-building. This rapport might have promoted more open disclosure.

Safety, ethical, and practical concerns precluded interviewing the respondents' partners. The reliance on the women's self-report data raises a question of reliability (Edleson & Brygger, 1986; Szinovacz, 1983; Szinovacz & Egley, 1995). Although the use of couples' data might have increased reliability, male partners are likely to underreport their perpetration of domestic violence due to such factors as social desirability, rationalization, minimization, and denial (Dutton & Hemphill, 1992; Saunders, 1991; Sugarman & Hotaling, 1997). Empirical evidence suggests that women are more likely to deny experiencing violence than report violence that they have not experienced (Rosenbaum, 1988). Thus, the observed rates of domestic violence in this study are likely to be conservative estimates.

Another potential limitation of this study is external validity. In the absence of a list that enumerates all women of Japanese descent, a list of households demarcated by Japanese surnames was used to draw a random sample. Despite the anticipated limitation of this method (e.g., potential exclusion of Japanese women whose surname had been changed due to interethnic or interracial marriage), this sampling method did result in the inclusion of women who were involved in such relationships. The completion rate of 52% in this study is comparable to other studies of women's victimization that employed similar in-depth face-to-face interviews (Russell & Howell, 1983; Wyatt, 1985) or telephone interviews (Smith, 1987). Although the effects of self-selection bias due to unmeasured characteristics remain unknown, the available data suggest that study participants and nonparticipants were comparable with respect to measured sociodemographic characteristics except for age. Conducted in Los Angeles, the findings of this study may not be generalizable to women of Japanese descent age 18 to 49 in the United States in general. The extent to which the respondents were representative of women of Japanese descent age 18 to 49 in Los Angeles County appears to support the generalizability of the findings to the

experiences of domestic violence among this group at least within Los Angeles County itself.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE, POLICY, AND RESEARCH

The high rate of domestic violence found in the present study calls for increased efforts to identify and assist women of Japanese descent in the United States who have suffered partners' violence. There are multiple factors that impede a woman's willingness or ability to discuss her partner's violence with a practitioner. Battered women of Japanese or Asian Pacific descent may face additional obstacles, such as language barriers, fear of involvement with the immigration or other legal agencies, and cultural values and behavior norms against using outside assistance programs (Yoshihama, 1996). In working with women of Japanese or Asian Pacific descent, it is important to acknowledge the difficulty in discussing highly private matters, such as domestic violence, and to communicate a willingness to listen to and assist them. Although the applicability to a clinical setting remains to be seen, findings of this study appear to suggest the effectiveness of directly asking women of Japanese descent whether they have been victimized, especially through the use of behavior-specific questions.

The development of assistance programs, such as shelters, legal advocacy services, and counseling programs, that respond to the unique needs of women of Japanese and Asian Pacific descent is essential. In the United States, such programs have been developed in certain areas with a high concentration of Asian Pacific American residents, such as Los Angeles, San Francisco, New York, and Boston. Given the rapid and steady increase in the Asian Pacific population in the United States, additional programs need to be established in other areas with large Asian Pacific American populations. Furthermore, various institutions with which battered women frequently come into contact, such as the courts, the police, the medical system, the welfare system, and child protective services, need to increase their ability to respond to the needs of individuals of diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

Existing data sources, such as records on homicides, hospitalizations, or applications for restraining orders, need to include

more specific ethnic and cultural background information on the victims and offenders rather than the broad racial categories often used. Disaggregating data according to ethnic and/or cultural groups would assist in identifying high-risk communities toward which the development of outreach, prevention, and intervention programs may be targeted. This need for data-driven, culturally sensitive domestic violence prevention and intervention programs echoes recent recommendations by federal agencies, such as the Office of Research on Women's Health, National Institutes of Health (Pinn & Chunko, 1997).

This study and other population-based studies collectively document the prevalence of domestic violence against women regardless of their culture of origin (Commonwealth Fund, 1993; Straus & Gelles, 1986). An understanding that domestic violence knows no cultural boundaries challenges a frequently and strongly held belief that domestic violence is not a serious problem in Japanese American or other Asian Pacific American communities. Such a new understanding may facilitate the recognition of male partners' violence and may encourage help-seeking among women of Japanese or other Asian Pacific descent.

Finally, certain forms of domestic violence reported by women in Japan were also reported by women of Japanese descent in the United States and were perceived as "somewhat abusive" or "very abusive." This finding underscores the need for more inclusive and culturally sensitive measures of domestic violence. Reliance on the use of measures developed for and normed on the mainstream, majority population needs to be reexamined. More systematic studies are needed to explore and identify the ways in which sociocultural factors affect the manifestations and perceptions of domestic violence. It is through this type of investigation that culturally relevant screening tools for practice and research may be developed.

The present study represents one of the first attempts to take into serious consideration the respondent's own perceptions about the level of abusiveness of a given act in its specific context. It also considered the socioculturally influenced manifestations of domestic violence. The relevance of the paradigm of examining individuals' experiences within their own meaning systems and in the unique sociocultural context is not limited to the study of women of Japanese descent in the United States. This paradigm is

relevant to any serious effort to measure and understand domestic violence.

NOTES

1. The use of a weighting system has been suggested to account for factors that contribute to varying degrees of severity of a given act, such as differences in the height and weight of each partner or the number of times a specific type of violence has been perpetrated (Straus, 1990). However, the way in which a woman gives meaning to her partner's act is influenced by numerous additional factors, such as the degree of threat, control, and intimidation a partner has previously instilled in her and the perceived lack of options for escape. Instead of a weighting system, one practical and more valid approach may be to directly ask the respondents themselves about the severity of domestic violence experienced.

2. In certain religious rituals (e.g., Shinto) in Japan, water or salt is used to symbolically purify an object (e.g., the entrance of a home). By extension, the act of throwing water at someone in a nonreligious context carries with it the symbolic implication that the individual on whom the water is thrown is dirty or impure, which can be interpreted as an ultimate insult.

3. The use of the term *violence* to describe some acts that do not involve direct force (e.g., verbal harassment or neglect), albeit debatable, is consistent with empirical findings that have illustrated that women define their victimization experiences that degrade, intimidate, and isolate them as a continuum of violence (Kelly, 1988a, 1988b).

4. Preliminary studies in Japan and in Los Angeles with women of Japanese descent found a Likert-type scale with more than four points difficult to meaningfully translate into the Japanese language.

5. Although the respondents' mean age (37) was older than that of the general population of women of Japanese descent age 18 to 49 in Los Angeles County who were born in the United States or Japan (mean age 33 at the 1990 census), the significance of the observed age difference is unknown because the census was conducted 5 years earlier.

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