Perceptions of Intimate Partner Abuse among Chinese Residents and Immigrants Living in the U.S.

Haley March
Haley.March@Colorado.EDU

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Perceptions of Intimate Partner Abuse among Chinese Residents and Immigrants Living in the U.S.

Haley March
Department of Psychology and Neuroscience

Primary Thesis Advisors:
Joanne Belknap, Ph.D., Department of Ethnic Studies
Diane Sasnett-Martichuski, Ph.D., Department of Psychology and Neuroscience

Honors Thesis Committee Members:
Mark A. Whisman, Ph.D., Department of Psychology and Neuroscience
Jennifer M. Stratford, MS, Ph.D., Department of Psychology and Neuroscience

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Abstract

In the United States of America and globally, the intimate partner abuse (IPA) epidemic has gained increasing focus and attention by legislators, law enforcement officials, researchers, and citizens at large. While there has been an increase in research on domestic violence, the research has not been inclusive of all minority groups. The most invisible racial/ethnic group in U.S. IPA research is Asians/Asian Americans, yet Asians as a whole are the fastest increasing immigrant group, and the Chinese population specifically has grown faster than any other race in the past decade (Hoeffel, Rastogi, Kim, & Shahid, 2012). To have a more comprehensive and inclusive understanding of the discourse surrounding IPA in the U.S., the experiences of Asians and Asian Americans in the U.S. must be researched to fill this void, the current multi-methods study (both quantitative surveys and one-on-one qualitative interviews) is from Chinese and Chinese American immigrant men and women in the U.S., and includes data on both their unique experiences and their perceptions of IPA. The study focuses on variables such as acculturation and attitudes towards marriage. I hypothesized that (1) the more acculturated an individual is, the more positive her/his attitude towards marriage; and (2) the interaction of acculturation and attitudes towards marriage will affect the participants’ perceptions of IPA. Both hypotheses were supported by these data.
CHAPTER ONE: A STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM AND AN APPLICABLE THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

Introduction

According to the World Health Organization, one in three women globally have experienced some form of intimate partner abuse (IPA; WHO, 2017). IPA can be defined as “physical, sexual, or psychological harm by a current or former partner or spouse” (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2017). This is not only a violation of women’s rights, but a significant public health problem as well (WHO, 2017). Research on IPA has grown significantly since the 1970s. In the 1990s in the United States, legislators began to recognize domestic violence as a social problem of great concern (Abraham, 2002). For a nation built on immigration, it is imperative to try and understand and include the experiences of not just individuals of the majority race, as prior research has, but to also incorporate and pay attention to minorities when seeking to analyze dynamics, patterns, and power relations related to IPA (Abraham, 2002). Although there is a growing body of research on domestic violence against African American (e.g., Potter, 2008), Latina (Hispanic; e.g., Villalon, 2010), and Native American women (e.g., Deer, 2015), to date there is very little research on Asian American women.

China is one of a few large societies in which IPA has scarcely been examined, and the prevalence and correlates of this type of abuse are unknown (Parish, Pan, Luo, Wang, & Laumann, 2004). Many scholars believe that for Chinese women globally, IPA is rooted within

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1 This is the definition that the CDC has for “intimate partner violence” (IPV). For the purposes of my thesis, I will be using the terms domestic violence, intimate partner violence, and intimate partner abuse interchangeably, all to refer to abuse by a current or former intimate partner. Consistent with some other scholars, I prefer IPA because much of the abuse by current or former intimate partners is not violent (e.g., death threats, psychological abuse, etc.).
Asian traditional patriarchal culture, and that IPA among the Chinese population in the U.S. is severely underreported (Chan, 2012; Ho, 1990; Kim & Sung, 2015; Lee & Au, 1998; Leung & Chueng, 2008; Yick, 2000). Kim and Sung (2015) suggest that it is underreported in the US because of “stigmatization and the deeply embedded concept of saving ‘face’” (p. 327). In traditional Chinese culture, women are expected to follow three aspects of obedience: to obey their father before marriage, their husband during marriage, and their sons in widowhood (Jirong, 2006). In such a male-centered culture, Chinese women had very little status or rights. Marriage was viewed as a necessity for women to expand familial lineage and gain wealth. This unique cultural set of social conditions and gender expectations place married women at risk of being particularly vulnerable to experiencing intimate partner abuse (IPA; Kim & Sung, 2015).

While marriage reforms have occurred since the opening-up of China in 1978 (partially due to Western influence), and wives are now granted the right to divorce, there is little data on how or if attitudes towards marriage have shifted in concurrence (Yeung & Hu, 2016). This is particularly concerning in the United States because Asians as a whole are the fastest increasing immigrant group, and the Chinese population specifically has grown faster than any other race in the past decade (Hoeffel et al., 2012).

Although recent marriage reforms suggest cultural attitudes toward marriage are changing, a study conducted by Yeung and Hu (2016), pooling data from the 2006, 2010, 2012, and 2013 Chinese General Social Survey (CGSS), showed otherwise. Their results indicated no significant differences between younger and older participants regarding views on the importance of marriage, and that Chinese people, as a whole, have remained committed to the “ideals” of marriage. The results also indicated the belief that parents who want to have a child
should be married. There was a slight decline across ages in terms of believing that marriage is a necessity, however, there is strong agreement it is highly valued. Surprisingly, there has also been a slight decline in the approval of divorce (Yeung & Hu, 2016).

There has been very little data collected in the United States on Chinese Americans (or any Asian Americans) and IPA. One study conducted in New York by Kim and Sung (2016) selected and analyzed 166 pairs of Chinese immigrant IPA victim-offender duads in the U.S. The researchers chose pairs from a group of women that sought victim services. Similar to my study, they examined the role of acculturation in the determination of IPA. Their results showed that immigrant men are most likely to act out against their partners when their partners are financially dependent on them. They also found that when victims have no legal permanent residency, they are more likely to be more seriously abused by their partner. The abuser’s English-proficiency and legal status, however, was unrelated to the frequency or severity of the abuse. They also found a negative correlation between the abuser’s level of education and the duration of the abuse. A surprising finding was that when the victims’ employment status increased, the seriousness of the abuse did as well. Notably, of the pairs they studied, over 65% of them still remained married (Kim & Sung, 2016). In order for a more inclusive, narrative range of knowledge surrounding domestic violence/IPA to be created, more attention needs to be spent on examining the experiences of Asian American women.

**Theoretical Framework**

When discussing domestic violence there are two main sociological theoretical perspectives, the “family violence perspective” (Straus, Gelles, & Steinmetz, 1980), and the “feminist perspective” (Kurz, 1989). While I will provide a brief explanation of both
perspectives, and both perspectives offer useful lenses to examine the experiences of survivors of IPA through, I have found the “ethno-gender perspective” (Abraham, 1995) more fitting for the current study. The following section will go on to explain this perspective and why it is most applicable.

The family violence models focus on intimate partner abuse as just one aspect of family violence. This perspective focuses on examining the family unit and determining if spousal violence is the result of the husband or wife's personalities, or rather stems from external stress factors (Straus et al., 1980). This view adopts the idea that both the husband and wife have characteristics that can be labeled as flaws such as mental illness, drug abuse, lack of socialization as a child, and so on, and when the two individuals form a family unit violence arises from the conflict these flaws create when the two individuals are trying to coexist (Stacey & Shupe, 1983). The perspective also acknowledges external factors as possible triggers for spousal violence to occur. These factors might include situations such as one spouse becoming unemployed, the couple living in poverty, and cultural stressors. While aiming to understand domestic violence through external stressors is relevant to this study, the perspective tends to emphasize violence as learned and cyclical and focuses on the family unit as the main source of analysis as Abraham (2002) explains.

In contrast, the feminist perspective focuses on the woman in the relationship as the source of analysis (Kurz, 1989). This perspective examines violence arising from global violence, patriarchal systems, and violence being viewed as acceptable (Abraham, 2002). This perspective analyzes how the battered woman reflects what is going on in society. If social structures cause women to be viewed as inferior, weak, passive, etc., then that makes men feel
subordinate to women and creates the sense of dominance. This reaffirming view of men as
dominant, aggressive, and more involved in important aspects of society (social, economic,
political) and women as inferior creates the patriarchal and misogynistic discourse in which
domestic violence is rooted in this perspective (Abraham, 2002). This perspective is grounded
in the idea that the oppression of women by men leads men to become perpetrators of IPA and
women to become victims (Dobash & Dobash, 1979; Walker, 1979). It is the power difference
that creates conflict and leads to spousal abuse so that men can keep the women subordinate
(Domestic Abuse Intervention Project [DAIP], n.d.). This perspective has many elements
applicable to the current study, however, the perspective does not account for important
intersections of factors such as race, class, ethnicity, and so on (Collins, 2000).

A perspective that accounts for the important intersectionality of gender and cultural
concerns is the ethno-gender approach (Abraham, 1995). This approach examines how gender is
constructed within a society, and how factors at the individual-, community-, and societal-level
all intersect and affect gender relations. This perspective examines how dominant social
structures impose cultural attitudes, perceptions, and beliefs onto couples who might not come
from the same cultural background. As Abraham explains, “[c]ourses of action, strategies,
distinctiveness of culture, and structural arrangements have to be understood and addressed by
seeing ethnic minority women not only through their gender but also through their positions in
terms of class and as an ethnic minority in the United States” (2002, p. 9). This approach most
directly takes into account the factors of the minority men/women in the current study. As the
current study pertains to Chinese and Chinese American immigrant men and women, it is
important to view their experiences through a framework that directly addresses how cultural
factors impact minorities in the United States. This theoretical framework will guide the analysis and discussion of the current study’s results.

The Current Study

The current study will investigate IPA perceptions among Chinese and Chinese American Immigrant men and women, as well as Chinese Americans born in the U.S. The data addresses their attitudes towards marriage and their knowledge and perceptions of intimate partner abuse. After a review of literature pertaining to this topic, I will move into the description and analysis of my study. My research study design includes an analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data. My quantitative data was collected in the form of an online Qualtrics survey. The questions I asked begin with basic demographic questions about the participants’ gender and current relationship status. The next section in the quantitative survey was comprised of questions derived from the validated Suinn-Lew Asian Self-Identity Acculturation Scale (Suinn, Ahuna, & Khoo, 1992) and the General Attitudes Towards Marriage Scale (Fam, Yaacob, Juhari, Arshat, & Mukhtar, 2017). My statistical analyses will present frequencies and bivariate analyses of the participants’ responses to determine if there are any significant relationships between levels of acculturation and the participants’ attitudes towards marriage.

In addition to collecting quantitative data, I collected qualitative data, using one-on-one in-depth interviews to help me determine a more narrative study of Chinese and Chinese American men and women’s attitudes towards marriage and knowledge of intimate partner abuse (see Appendix for the qualitative interview questions). My interview questions asked about the participants’ demographic information, their childhood/youth background, their knowledge of intimate partner abuse, and their attitudes towards marriage. My interview focused on
determining any patterns between the experiences of these men and women, including patterns of values embedded in their beliefs towards marriage while growing up and if their current view towards marriage has shifted.

The major objectives of this study are to identify and better understand (1) Patterns or themes in the narratives of these immigrant men and women; (2) How/if differences in levels of acculturation impact the participants’ responses and attitudes; (3) If acculturation has shifted the participants’ attitudes towards marriage away from a traditional Chinese cultural perspective; (4) Participants’ attitudes about intimate partner abuse; and (5) If any of these relationships are statistically significant. I hypothesize a significant relationship between the participants’ levels of acculturation and their attitudes towards marriage. I also hypothesize that there will be a significant interaction between views towards marriage and levels of acculturation on the participants’ perceptions of IPA. The final hypothesis will be analyzed through comparison of the quantitative data and the qualitative data conducted via one-on-one interviews.

I am honored to be conducting an Honors Thesis in the Department of Psychology and Neuroscience to study Chinese Americans’ perceptions about intimate partner abuse (IPA). Research on Chinese Americans’ experiences with and perceptions about IPA is scant, and I hope that my research will contribute to filling this void in scholarship. I also hope that my thesis study will provide a more narrative study of domestic violence perceptions among Chinese American men and women, as well as provide information on how to better respond to, help, and ultimately work towards preventing IPA among Chinese American men and women.
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This chapter documents the scant research on Chinese Americans’ perceptions about and knowledge of intimate partner abuse (IPA). As noted in the last chapter, there is very little research in this area and it merits in-depth research and discussion. Moreover, there is an increasing amount of IPA research, yet there is still a gap in research among ethnic minority groups in the United States, particularly Asian Americans (Abraham, 2002). In order to further our understanding about domestic violence, it is important to analyze the experiences of individuals of all races, genders, and origins in this country. Chinese Americans have been the fastest growing demographic in this country in the past decade (Hoeffel et al., 2012). It is time that we expand our knowledge to be inclusive of their experiences. When examining the existing literature, previous studies have demonstrated acculturation as one of many factors associated with both the frequency and the severity of intimate partner abuse among immigrants (Kim & Sung, 2015; Jin & Keat, 2010). Through examining traditional Chinese family structure, acculturation, and internal and external barriers among Chinese American immigrants, this thesis aims to further the understanding of the unique factors that contribute to knowledge and perceptions of intimate partner abuse within this minority group.

The Chinese Family System in History

As previously stated, it is believed by many scholars that IPA is rooted within Asian traditional patriarchal culture for Chinese women globally, and is severely underreported due to cultural values such as “saving face” (Chan, 2012; Ho, 1990; Lee & Au, 1998; Leung & Chueng, 2008; Yick, 2000). The origins of the Chinese family system becoming patriarchal has been
dated back to Emperor Yaou’s reign in 2357-2258 B.C. (Su, 1992). It was under his administration that fundamental laws of family systems were created, the most pertinent being, “between husband and wife there should be attention to their separate functions, between father and son, affection, between old and young, a proper order” (Su, 1992, p. 22). Here we see an emphasis already being placed on husbands and wives paying attention to the separate functions ascribed to their gender. It is also noteworthy that there should be affection between a father and his son, leaving out the wife completely, and only bringing her up to mention her duty to pay attention to her role as a wife/mother. The piece about proper order refers to the respect that should be paid to those elder to you, which is another important aspect of Chinese culture.

Under the Chow Dynasty (1122 to 221 BC), the family system became established and has perpetuated to the present time with very few modifications (Su, 1992). Perhaps the dynamic within the family having such stable roots and dating so far back are part of the reasons that it is hard for change to occur today. Through analysis of poetry from the Chow Dynasty and several others, it becomes clear that wives had lower status, were portrayed as supportive of their husbands, and were traditionally deserving and loyal, cheerful, sympathetic, unselfish, and unconditionally faithful (Su, 1992).

During the Han Dynasty (206 BCE-220 CE), a holiday was created and is known as the Qixi Festival, also known as the Seventh Night Festival, and is currently celebrated as Valentine's Day in China. This celebration occurs on the seventh day of the seventh lunar month and exemplifies the ways that gender roles even played an early role in creating holidays. The legend behind the Seventh Night Festival is that there was a weaver maid named Zhinü, and a cowherd named Niulang. Zhinü was the seventh daughter of a Goddess who had come down
from heaven because she grew bored. Niulang saw her from a distance and fell in love with the girl, as she did with him. Their love was banished because a mere mortal was not fit to marry a descendant of a Goddess. He found a way to go up to Heaven and find her, but when her mother found out, she was so upset that she banished them to separate sides of the Milky Way. Once a year the magpies, feeling sorry for the couple, build a bridge, and the lovers can see each other for a night. While this tale seems to place her status above him, the way the festival is celebrated by women is that they pray for talents good enough to find a man to love them as much as he loved her (Kleeman, 2018). On this day women pray to become extremely talented needlewomen or weavers so that they can be worthy of a man and have him fall in love with her essentially for the domestic work she would contribute to the relationship (Kleeman, 2018). Thus, we can see even holidays such as this one reinforcing gender roles and a patriarchal lifestyle. The inequality can also be seen in the fact that the men do not pray for women, women pray for a man to choose them, implying that men have the power in the situation to choose the woman they will marry.

Marriage was not seen as a man and a women choosing each other out of love, but rather marriages occurred to serve as an alliance between two families (Abraham, 2002). Married couples were paired together based on characteristics such as economic status, social status, family background, and appearance, not by feelings like love or emotional ties (Abraham, 2002). The value of sexual purity until marriage was strongly enforced among young women, but it was not as important among young men (Su, 1992). It was believed that by the couple hiding familial issues from the public to “save face” couples would fall in love through navigating that together (Abraham, 2002). Family structure had become characterized in China by stability and dedication (Su, 1992). The option of divorce was not introduced for many decades, and still
remains heavily stigmatized (Yeung & Hu, 2016). Traditionally, when a son married, the wife would move in with him in his parents’ house. When their son married, his wife would do the same; it was common for many generations to live under the same roof (Su, 1992). Today, there is typically not more than two or three generations living together (Su, 1992).

In traditional Chinese structure, all families had a head, almost always the father (Su, 1992). Dating back to ancient times, the father was responsible for all finances and financial decisions. He had the right to withhold all income from family members and spend the money however he chooses. He was also responsible for all of his family members’ actions, and therefore had the right to inflict whatever consequences he see fit (Su, 1992). Wives stayed home while their husbands worked or hunted for food. They were expected to maintain the household, care for the children, and serve their husbands’ and sons’ needs. They had very little agency or freedom. It was not until somewhat recently that divorce became an option available to both the husband and the wife through sets of marriage reforms.

While marriage reforms have occurred since the opening-up of China in 1978, the current laws still emphasize the Chinese family system as stable and harmonious. For example, written in the current Marriage Law of the People’s Republic of China Article 4, it is stated that husband and wife are expected to “maintain the marriage and family relationship characterized by equality, harmony, and civility” (1981). Laws still place emphasis on maintaining social harmony and maintaining the marriage; thus, to break up the marriage is considered deviant and discrediting as it goes against a legal set of ascribed norms.

Many reforms have occurred since the opening-up of China due to Western influence, and wives are now granted the right to divorce, as well as having equal rights within the marriage
to property, income, and custody. However there is little data on how/if attitudes towards marriage have actually shifted in concurrence (Yueng & Hu, 2016). There is also little data on how attitude shifts may or may not occur among those who have moved to other countries, such as the United States. A recent study conducted by Yeung and Hu (2016) pooling data from the 2006, 2010, 2012, and 2013 Chinese General Social Survey (CGSS), showed that attitudes have not become more liberal even though their laws might be. The results of their study indicated that younger participants did not view marriage as any less important than older participants, and that Chinese have remain committed to the ideals of marriage. The results also indicated that parents who want to have a child should be married. There was a slight decline across ages in believing that marriage is a necessity, however, there is strong agreement it is highly valued. Surprisingly, there has also been a slight decline in the approval of divorce (Yeung & Hu, 2016).

As many scholars believe that for Chinese women globally, IPA is rooted within Asian traditional patriarchal cultural tenants and is severely underreported, this should be particularly concerning in the United States because the Chinese population has grown faster than any other race in the past decade (Hoeffel et al., 2012). While patriarchal cultures may be the primary root of IPA among Asian American immigrants, it is believed that acculturation also plays a role (Kim & Sung, 2015).

**Effects of Acculturation**

Evidence has shown that acculturation plays a role in IPA among Asian immigrants (Caetano, Schafer, Clark, Cunradi, & Raspberry, 2000; Jasinski, 1998; Nilsson, Brown, Russel, & Khamphakdy-Brown, 2008; Raj & Silverman, 2003). It has been demonstrated that when immigrants do not have sufficient acculturative strategies to cope with new challenges that living
in a new host country presents, acculturative stress is created (Berry, 2005). This new type of stress can manifest as a trigger for abusers (Kim & Sung, 2015). A study was conducted in 2016 that selected and analyzed 166 pairs of Chinese immigrant victim-offenders in the U.S. The researchers chose pairs from a group of 210 women between 2004 and 2009 in New York that all sought out victim services. They examined the role of acculturation in the determination of IPA. While there is no defined way to measure acculturation, there are strong predictors that have been established among immigrants, such as legal status, language proficiency, education, income, and so on (Lueck & Wilson, 2010; Poppitt & Frey, 2007). This study measured acculturation using legal status and language proficiency and used information such as education level, income, and employment status as supplemental measures (Kim & Sung, 2015).

Their results showed that immigrant men are most likely to act out against their partners when their partners are financially dependent on them. They also found that when victims have no legal permanent residency, they are more likely to be more seriously abused by their partner. Abuser’s English proficiency and legal status appeared to have no effect on the frequency or severity of the abuse however. They also found a negative correlation between the abuser’s level of education and the duration of the abuse. A surprising finding was that when the victims’ employment status increased, the seriousness of the abuse did as well (Kim & Sung, 2015). One proposed reasoning for this trend is that a female partners’ increasing employment status results in the male partner feeling like they have lost power during the process of acculturating to a less patriarchal society (Jin & Keat, 2010). This may serve as a major trigger for them. In addition, it is important to note that of the pairs studied, over 65% of them still remained married (Kim & Sung, 2015).
Internal and External Barriers

Research on domestic violence in the United States tends to focus on the relationship between the partners, which not only assumes a preconceived idea of marital roles and characteristics, but ignores many barriers in place for people of ethnic minorities (Abraham, 2002). Many barriers exist, both internally and externally, that hinder domestic violence from being stopped among immigrants and hinder the ability for immigrants to receive the help they deserve. As Abraham states, “…we need to understand how certain factors other than the behavior of the abuser heighten the immigrant women’s [and men’s] vulnerability to abuse. Important others can become partners in crime through their passive or active participation or through their strategic silence on the issue of abuse” (2002, p. 107). In other words, there is more to understanding domestic violence than understanding what triggers the perpetrators abuse. It is important to examine cultural factors and obstacles that lead to the silenced positionality the victims find themselves in.

Internal barriers can include parents and in-laws, changes in family structures and values, shifted socioeconomic statuses, presence of supportive friends, and so on (Abraham, 2002). According to Abraham, “[f]or immigrant women, not having an economic or social support system coupled with the geographic distance from their parents can often be a drawback in parents’ comprehending the gravity of the situation” (2002, p. 118). Parents may see their child’s desire to divorce or leave their spouse as extreme and stigmatized, not taking into account the potentially fatal situation that could be occurring, thus, deterring their child from leaving the abuser. In addition, the woman might not have an income of her own as well. Traditionally in China the males work, so even if the woman were to want to leave, she might not have the
financial resources to do so. In terms of social support as a barrier, in a foreign country if an immigrant woman were to leave their spouse, she might not have social support and therefore have nowhere to go and no one to turn to seek help, emotional support, and refuge. In an interview Abraham conducted highlighting the importance of social support, one woman described the closed-mindedness of the South Asian community, the failure of her friends to do anything to intervene and stop the abuser, and the blame they placed on her for causing the abusers’ anger (Abraham, 2002). The woman, Usha, states, “All my friends were O.K., but as they found out that I am going through a divorce everybody started disappearing… I think the community is very much closed about the situation” (Abraham, 2002, p. 119). The stigma still persists among many members of Asian communities, and people are afraid of speaking out or entertaining the idea of becoming more open minded and supporting their friend due to fear of losing their social status and ties and becoming another person who is spurned.

External barriers refer to systemic failures of preventing/stopping domestic violence, namely, inadequate responses from law enforcement officers (Abraham, 2002). Some examples of external barriers include language barriers, negative attitudes towards ethnic minorities, fear about legal status, inadequate training, and officers’ reluctance to take action against abusers. All of these factors present challenges for immigrant women seeking help and protection (Abraham, 2002). As one woman interviewed by Abraham recalls:

He was hitting me very badly. Then he started threatening to take my life. Somehow I escaped from him and went and hid in the bathroom. Then I went outside and called the police and they came. [A female and a male came to the site.] They asked me questions but I don’t remember anything. They asked him but he said that he hadn't done anything.
They said that they knew he had beaten me up, because I was lying down and bruised all over. They told him that this is America and you can’t hit anybody here. If you hit like this then you can be arrested. He still denied beating me. I told them he had beaten me, but he kept on denying it, saying that somebody else had beaten me up… I was not able to give a full statement as I fainted, so they didn’t take him… The next day I went back to my job, and it just continued like that… I never called the police again. Why should I call them? (2002, p. 123).

The participant was being severely beaten, called upon law enforcement officials for help, but instead of receiving help, they did nothing. They just let him walk free due to the fact that she fainted so her statement was not considered complete. Even though she repeated told them he had beaten her, was so severely injured that she became unconscious, they did nothing. So, who is she supposed to turn to? If calling the police, the people who we are supposed to be able to trust to uphold justice and protect us, results in no actions taken, and could potentially make things worse once they leave, why should she or any other woman in her position turn to them for help? It is a very sad truth about our criminal legal system that it has failed to help so many immigrants. Immigrants are also scared to call because of fears that the officers won’t see a woman being abused and in need of immediate help, but will see someone who potentially doesn’t have full legal status and will cause them more trouble than they were already in with their spouse.

**Gaps in Research**

While research has begun being conducted on Chinese and Chinese American men and women and intimate partner abuse in the United States, there is much more work to be done.
Studies have focused on acculturation, barriers, and attitudes towards marriage in China since reforms have taken place, but there have not been studies conducted that adopt an ethno-gender perspective when analyzing data collected that takes into account attitudes towards marriage, acculturation, barriers, and perceptions of intimate partner abuse all together. With the following study I hope to start filling in these gaps in research and contribute to the existing knowledge.

**Overview of the Current Study**

The current study will serve to start filling this void in research on Asian Americans and IPA. I aim to conduct a similar study to Kim and Sung’s (2015), however, I will be focusing on examining how acculturation affects Chinese and Chinese American immigrants in the U.S., how their experiences have influenced their attitudes towards marriage, and how they have come to understand intimate partner abuse. I have used factors such as education level, employment status, and socioeconomic status to measure degrees of acculturation. I employed the use of both an interview and survey design to obtain my data. The data was then coded, computerize, and then analyzed using a correlational approach to determine any statistically significant findings. The interviews were transcribed and used to better understand patterns of the narratives of the study’s participants. My hope is that through gathering this data we can further understand what makes Chinese-American survivors of IPA stay in a relationship with their abuser, or choose to leave and file for divorce. Hopefully this data will serve to raise awareness of the unique plight these immigrants face, lessen the social stigma of divorce, and provide a voice for those who feel silenced by their culture. The ultimate aim of the study is to contribute to the prevention of intimate partner abuse among this minority group through furthering our understanding and
awareness. The following chapters will detail my methods, results, and discuss any conclusions that were drawn.
CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Introduction

This chapter will describe the methods used to study Chinese and Chinese immigrants living in the U.S. regarding their perceptions of intimate partner abuse (IPA). Although I hope in the future to be able to research actual Chinese residents and immigrants living in the U.S. who have experienced IPA, this study helps fill the void in the IPA research on this population.

Study Design

The design for the current study was inspired by Kim and Sung’s (2015) study, referenced in the previous chapter. The research study design is multi-methods, including both quantitative and qualitative data. The quantitative data was collected through an online Qualtrics survey. Questions were used to assess the participants’ attitudes towards marriage and degree of acculturation. The data from this portion was used to identify any significant statistical effects or relationships. The qualitative data were collected using one-on-one in-depth interviews, in my efforts to determine a more narrative study of Chinese and Chinese American men’s and women’s attitudes towards marriage and knowledge of intimate partner abuse (IPA). Consistent with ethical research and the University of Colorado Boulder Institutional Review Board (IRB), data collected for this study remains anonymous and all names were changed to Participant A, Participant B, and so on, to ensure anonymity and confidentiality for all participants. The survey portion took three to ten minutes, while the interviews ranged from 15 to 45 minutes, depending on the participants responses, details, anecdotes, and questions.

Participants

All participants were screened using a script to ensure they were eligible to participate.
Participants consisted of individuals over the age of 18 who were proficient in English and who were immigrants or who’s family’s previously had immigrated. All participants were Chinese descendants. There were 12 participants in the survey portion and eight participants interviewed. There were six males and six females who took part in the qualitative portion, and five males and three males who participated in both portions of the study. The ages ranged from 20 to 23 years. The mean age of the participants was 21.12 years old. Participants consisted of mainly University of Colorado Boulder students and international students of all different areas of study and backgrounds. The majority of participants were raised in China for most of their childhood. Of the participants interviewed, two of the participants were born in the United States, one in Vietnam, and the rest in China. When asked how they identify during the survey portion, six of them identified as “Very Asian," two as “Mostly Asian," one as “Bicultural," one as “Mostly Westernized," and two as “Very Westernized.” When asked about how they would rate their pride in their Asian heritage four responded as “Extremely Proud,” four as “Moderately Proud,” two as having “Little Pride," and two as “No pride but do not feel negative toward group.” The language proficiency varied across individuals, but all spoke coherent English. As previously noted, all of the participants’ data used in this study were changed to remain anonymous. Participants all signed multiple consent forms and participated voluntarily. They received a $15 Starbucks gift card to show my gratitude for their time, effort, and participation.

Measures

The Qualtrics survey consisted of previously validated scales. These scales include the Suinn-Lew Asian Self-Identity Acculturation Scale (Suinn et al., 1992) and the General Attitudes
Towards Marriage Scale (Fam et al., 2017). Participants were also asked their sex and their relationship status.

**Procedure**

This study was designed in a manner that would respect all individuals’ privacy and keep their responses anonymous. As previously stated, all participants volunteered to enroll in the study. They were recruited via recruitment flyers, in class announcements, and by word of mouth. The participants then reached out to me if they were interested in learning more or enrolling in the study. Before being enrolled, participants were screened for eligibility either in person or via telephone. During the pre-screening no data was collected; the researcher just asked if the participant meets the enrollment criteria. If the participant is a Chinese American man or woman over the age of 18 whose family members or who themselves have moved to the United States from China, they will be enrolled in the study should they decide to participate. If they were screened over the telephone, I read an informal consent script. Participants were made aware that they have the right to withdraw from the study at any point in the process, and that they would in no way be penalized and their decision would be respected and understood. They were also notified that if they complete both portions of the study, they will receive the Starbucks card as compensation for their time and effort. No participants withdrew from the study.

After the participant completed the pre-screening process and proceeded to enroll in the study, they then took the online Qualtrics questionnaire. The questionnaire was sent to them via my collegiate email to the email they felt comfortable providing. The questionnaire first prompts the participants to read an informed consent form and provide consent before continuing. They
then type in a code so that their name is never involved. The code was made by the last four
digits of their telephone number, the date of their birth month, and the day of the month they
were born. The questionnaire then begins by asking about the participants’ gender (Male,
Female, or Other) and current relationship status (Single, In a Relationship, Married, Divorced).
The survey then moved on to asking questions derived from The Suinn-Lew Asian Self-Identity
Acculturation Scale (Suinn et al., 1992). This will ask them questions about language abilities,
language preferences, food preferences and so on. The final section of the survey used questions
from the General Attitudes Towards Marriage Scale (Fam, et al., 2017) that asks questions
regarding their view of marriage using a Likert-rating scale rating style. The entire online survey
was designed to take the participants about five-ten minutes. Most participants completed it on
the shorter end.

Questions from The Suinn-Lew Asian Self-Identity Acculturation Scale (Suinn et al.,
1992) asked questions such as “What language can you speak?,” “What language do you
prefer?” with answers choices such as “Asian only (for example, Chinese, Japanese, Korean,
Vietnamese, etc.),” “Mostly Asian, some English,” “Asian and English about equally,” “Mostly
English, some Asian,” and “Only English.” Other questions asked about how they identify
themselves, how their parents identify, ethnic origins of friends growing up and now, how much
pride they have in their heritage, what foods they prefer, music preferences, movie preferences,
and so on. As mentioned, this scale has been previously validated and proven to be reliable.
There were 21 questions in this section.

Questions from the General Attitudes Towards Marriage Scale (Fam, et al., 2017)
measured how positively or negatively the participants felt towards marriage on a 7-point Likert
scale ranging from entirely disagree to entirely agree. The content includes statements like “Marriages make people happy,” “I am fearful of marriage,” “People should not marry,” “I have doubts about marriage,” “Marriage is important,” and so on. There were 10 questions in this section. The participants were then thanked for their responses and participation, and given a box to write any comments, questions, or concerns anonymously.

Upon completion of the online survey, I worked with the participants who chose to continue the study and go on to participate in the interview process to arrange for the interview to take place in a setting and at a time most convenient for them. I worked around their schedules to accommodate them. Before proceeding with the interview, the participants either gave verbal consent over the phone, or signed an informed consent form. The interview questions started with basic demographic information such as age and gender, and then asked about their experiences as a youth/growing up with questions such as “What was your neighborhood like growing up?” and “How would you describe your family?” It asked if the participants remembered any particular values their parents instilled in them while growing up and if so, what those values were. The interview questions then moved on to discussing recent and current events in the participants’ lives such as how the area the participant currently lives in differs from that of their childhood (if it does), how their values have changed in any way (if they have), and how their experiences have shifted their attitudes towards marriage (if they have). The questions regarding intimate partner abuse asked if they have known anyone who has experienced intimate partner abuse, if they think it is something prevalent among immigrants, and if they could give a married man or woman who is experiencing intimate partner abuse advice, either the victim and/or the abuser, what that advice would be. I then concluded the
interview by thanking them for their time and letting them know they can contact me with questions, comments, or concerns at any point via email or my cell phone. The interview consisted of seven demographic questions, 22 childhood/adolescent background questions, and 21 recent and current life event questions. The questions were not always asked depending on the participants’ responses. Some questions were also added for certain subjects to clarify their responses and ensure accuracy on my part so that the responses would be as true to what they were trying to convey as possible.

**Data Analyses**

The quantitative data from the Qualtrics survey was exported into Excel. The demographic data was used for descriptive statistics about the participants. The questions from The Suinn-Lew Asian Self-Identity Acculturation Scale (Suinn et al., 1992) were scored by responses corresponding to numbers 1 through 5. The results were then summed for each participant and then divided by total number of questions answered to get their score. Higher scores correspond with a higher degree of acculturation. The questions from the General Attitudes Towards Marriage Scale (Fam et al., 2017) were scored by converting the answers to corresponding numbers (1 through 7), with one being “Entirely disagree” and seven being “Entirely agree.” Questions 28, 29, 30, 31, 34, and 36 were reversed scored. Their results were then averaged, and the higher the score, the more positively the participant’s attitude towards marriage was and vice versa. R Studio was used to analyze the results and draw conclusions about any meaningful findings. The qualitative data was transcribed and then organized into patterns.

**Data Management**
The data collected from the Qualtrics survey was exported into Excel with the coded participants’ identities so that they cannot be traced to the data. The file containing which coded participate was assigned to what participant letter in this paper (Participant A, B, etc.) was kept on a separate hard drive and kept in a locked file cabinet. No one other than my thesis co-chairs had access to the document. The only people with access to the data files will be the principal investigator and the thesis advisors. Upon completion of my data analysis the key to the code will be erased from the hard drive immediately. Consent forms, notes, and any hard copies of paper documents will be kept in a locked file cabinet as well.

Each participant was assigned a code number and an anonymous name, as I previously mentioned (Participant A, B, C, etc.) so that their real names and identities were not used in any documents or data analysis. No other documents other than the consent forms and this key code will be linked to their identities.

Electronic files and my thesis drafts have been kept in a password protected drive on my laptop. My laptop is also password protected and was checked by the university’s technology department to ensure there were no viruses or threats. The audio recordings from my interviews were kept in a locked folder on my password protected cell phone and then were immediately transferred to the hard drive and erased from the folder on my cell phone. The transcriptions of the interviews was kept by me to use during my thesis paper in the password protected drive on my laptop. The information from the interviews that is used in my paper is not able to be linked in any way to the participants. Their privacy was maintained throughout.
CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

Introduction

The findings for this study are reported in this chapter. I will begin with the quantitative findings from the Qualtrics survey. Next, I will report the qualitative research findings. This chapter also includes whether the hypotheses were confirmed.

Quantitative Findings

The Qualtrics survey yielded many significant and interesting results. I first ran a correlation with generation, Suinn scores, and marriage attitude scores, but there was not enough variability in the generation responses (most were first generation, with only two second and one third) to meet the criteria for running a correlational analysis. There was also no effect of relationship status on average marriage scores. The average attitude towards marriage score was 4.38, with only two scores below a 4, so generally the participants were mid-range, slightly positive. The average Suinn score was 2.58 indicating that participants were overall on the less acculturated side.

Next, a two sample t-test was run to determine any significant relationship between Suinn scores and sex. The mean sample estimates were 2.13 for females and 3.03 for males. The results were near significance (t (10) = -2.04, p = 0.07) with a 95% confidence interval of -1.89 to -0.08. In addition to running statistical analyses, I also ran effect size analyses, which help to show an effect in cases of very small sample sizes, like I have here. For sex differences on the Suinn measure, there was a large effect size of d = 1.17.

There was also a small effect (d = 0.20) of relationship status on Suinn scores. The mean score for participants in a relationship was 2.44, and for single participants was 2.26. he
two-sample t-test did not however show a significant difference, \( t(10) = -0.30, p = 0.77 \) with a 95% confidence interval of -1.53 to 1.17.

Another two sample t-test on marriage score averages by sex resulted in a medium to large effect size \( d=0.69 \). The sample estimate means for females was 4.13, and for males was 4.63. The results were not statistically significant \( t(10) = -1.20, p = .26 \) with a 95% confidence interval of -1.43 to 0.43. See Table 1 for means for sex for the Suinn-Lew Self-Acculturation scores and Marriage Attitude scores.

**Qualitative Findings**

Many clear patterns emerged from analyzing the transcribed responses of the participants to my interview questions. I will focus on the five most prominent and pertinent patterns. The five patterns I will discuss in the narratives of the participants are IPA being more accepted and taken less seriously in China than in the United States making it more prevalent in the opinions of the subjects, the continued importance placed on marriage, the emphasis on family and collectivist culture and how this creates cultural implications of speaking out and getting a divorce, gender roles, and particular stressors that might make it harder for immigrants to leave their abuser. Other themes included gender roles and female status changing due to the ratio of males to females. It is important to note that many of the responses include improper grammar or broken English. I do not feel comfortable with adding (sic) to their quotations implying there is something wrong with the way they speak when English is most of their second language learned. I find it very impressive the way they were able to express their responses in English and did not want to add anything distracting or take away from that.
Pattern 1: IPA being more accepted and taken less seriously in China than in the United States making it more prevalent in the opinions of the subjects.

A shocking finding I was not anticipating was that every single participant had experience with IPA either themselves, with family members, or friends. Many participants made it clear in the responses that domestic violence/IPA was something more accepted and tolerated in China for several reasons. When asked about if the participants had ever heard the term *domestic violence* (DV) growing up, many of them were unsure about the definition. One participant even laughed and said “No, what is that?” (Participant A, 2018). After explaining what it was she responded, “I think I just knew some news about it but never talked about ya”. This was an extremely common response. Everyone of the participants responded that it was never something they had talked about growing up, and it was always something they saw on the news or from experiences. When I asked why participants thought that was, Participant B responded, “I think the government like forbid everything from you hearing it” (2018). Due to the government's strict control, there are not textbooks or statistics on IPA in China, although it is reported sometimes in the news and in newspapers. Most people felt it was most prevalent in rural areas with less access to media, since in cities and areas with more technology that had more access to Western thoughts and information regarding intimate partner abuse and gender roles. Another participant thought that the reasoning for it being more prevalent but not talked about was because “the first example was talking about my grandma because she grew up in China and that's a very uh it’s not looked down on as much as it is in our Western culture so we definitely talked about how Asian values are a little bit different in that sense.” He went on to say that it’s talked about differently too because “it's just more accepted I guess, not in a good way
but male female relationship in China is a lot different than here” (Participant C, 2018). Another participant elaborated on it being more accepted due to the fact that there is very little, if any, police action taken. Participant D explained that “DV is not as regulated over there as it is over here. Over here you can call the police but over there, you know you call the police and it’ll take them, I mean nothing could happen, most of the time nothing happens because there’s more crime over there so little things happening, “little things,” like DV over there happen so often that it’s over looked.” If there is no action taken against abusers, victims are less likely to see what they’re going through as wrong and take it seriously themselves. Another participant said that since it is so prevalent, many people might think “oh it’s just life” (Participant A, 2018) and stay with the person and accept the abuse as a regular common experience.

In addition, participants also said that in China, the idea that men are more important than women is common, especially in rural areas. Many people in China have accepted and internalized that view, according to my participants. Participant B stated, “I would just say [since] their own status in the family is low… Like they will say uh I give you money, I feed you, I give you everything” (2018). Since woman’s status in the family is lower than the husbands, the husbands tend to hold things like money and being the provider over the woman's head. This feeling of superiority and the notion that the women should be unconditionally grateful and therefore be obedient rationalizes their anger and abuse towards the woman in their minds. This rationalization coupled with internalized understandings of a woman's place in society and in her marriage makes her feel like it is acceptable in the eyes of participants.

*Pattern 2:* The continued importance placed on marriage.
Another theme in the subjects’ narratives was bringing up the importance placed on marriage. Many subjects noted that their parents do find it important for them to marry, although they do not pressure them yet since they are in school still. One participant noted that every time he speaks to his Grandmother, who was the first in his family to come over from China, the first thing she asks him is if he has any plans on getting married and if he has more Asian friends now (Participant C, 2018). Others noted that in China marriage is something that is definitely talked about more, and something that most people talk about in terms of only marrying one time and making it work, in contrast to the way they perceived Americans as seeing marriage as something you can do several times. One participant’s comment on this was that “marriage is definitely more traditional; whereas I think marriage here is a bit more casual uhm less like commitment heavy I think (Participant C, 2018).”

In terms of pressure to get married young, one participant noted that marriage was “[d]efinitely talked about more, especially if you’re a girl over there, you wanna get married as soon as possible to have an extra support (Participant D, 2018). Another noted that although her parents supported her waiting until after whatever degree of schooling she wants to achieve, many of her parents’ friends have different views. Her father’s friend told her that after graduate school “the girl is just like that’s it, and the graduate school and something is not important and the marriage is the most important thing” (Participant A, 2018). Many men still believe, especially men of older generations as noted by most participants, that there is not an importance of women going to school or getting a high degree of education because they will most likely stay home and take care of the kids, and most male participants said they would rather they work and their wife not. Many people felt like there was more pressure to get married and have kids
than to complete high degrees of education and secure a dream job. Another participant also stated that because there was such a great deal of pressure to get married, “[i]n China uh most of the people [get married] even they don't love each other” (Participant G, 2018). People feel so pressured to get married that even if they don’t love each other, they will marry for the sake of marriage and to be able to start having a family.

*Pattern 3:* The emphasis on family, collectivist culture, and how this creates cultural implications of speaking out and getting a divorce.

Almost all participants referenced the emphasis on family due to Chinese collectivist culture. Many subjects felt that because of the importance placed on family, there would be significant negative effects should a couple get divorced. Multiple subjects’ parents had unhappy marriages but ended up staying together, and multiple subjects had family members in abusive relationships that stayed as well. The stigma of divorce is far reaching. In addition, one participant noted that if you are married to an officer of some sort, you are never granted the right to divorce them (Participant B, 2018).

When speaking about family, many people made reference to collectivist values. Participant E, for example, states that “there's less individualism in China. They’re more like, like you're not living for yourself, you're living for the family” (2018). The family unit is more important than individual happiness. Even if an individual wants to get a divorce, due to collectivist tenets, this is looked down upon:

I think it's just expectations of like you having to stay in the marriage for the kids and like just like expectations of your role in the marriage and as a family because Chinese American culture is like very Collectivist, and we have huge emphasis on like family and
family values and all about the family and stuff so sometimes that has higher weight or plays more significance then like you as an individual wanting to leave the marriage just to leave the marriage (Participant F, 2018).

Even if people want to choose happiness, and feel like getting a divorce will increase their chances of living a happy life, as Participant F stated, if someone wants to leave a marriage “just to leave the marriage” that is not a good enough reason to justify breaking up a family unit, as that is the highest priority. In addition, as breaking up a family is frowned upon, and as I previously discussed it being considered more accepted and tolerated, many subjects viewed speaking out about abuse occurring as something that would cause negative attention to their family.

As discussed in previous chapters, the concept of “saving face,” keeping issues private/within the family, and the importance placed on striving to uphold social harmony, make it very difficult for survivors to speak out since it goes against their cultural values and beliefs. Because very few people speak out, the government does not provide statistics, and legal action is rarely taken, survivors may feel as if there is no point in speaking out because there is no possible good outcome or solution. Participant G spoke on this and the reasoning behind people not speaking out about it and explained that, “[abuse] is more common in Chinese…in China, Asian people don’t want to speak out so they will have some problem… the problem has not been solved it become again and again” (2018). The participant saw abuse as something that is more common among Asian people because no one speaks out about it, so no solution or advice for survivors has been offered, leading to the problem to be replicated over and over again with no change. If there is no perceived hope for individuals in an abusive marriage should they leave,
only knowledge that they will be breaking up a family in doing so, become stigmatized and isolated should they get a divorce, there are only negative implications should they choose to speak out in their perspective. Therefore, they choose to live in accordance with collectivist values and adhere to the societal norms.

In addition, the stigma surrounding divorcing “just to leave the marriage," and going against collectivist values that are placed before individual wants, needs, or desires, makes it particularly difficult to speak out about IPA and/or get a divorce and leave the relationship. As Participant F continued to speak on this topic, she stated, “usually in Chinese culture the parents stay together for the kids” (2018). Many other participants were in agreement that there was much importance placed on keeping the family together, especially for the children. Even though IPA is a prevalent problem in China, “there’s a lot of news about abusive relationships, but people just don’t get divorced in China” (Participant B, 2018). Regardless of the circumstances, and regardless of the knowledge that IPA is an ongoing issue, divorce is just not seen as something people do. If someone were to get divorced, they would not only be ostracized, looked down upon, and become an outsider, but their child would be as well. This is another aspect of why so many couples in China stay together for the sake of their child. As a participant explained from his experiences growing up in China, “[i]f you divorce it mean your child will have just a single mother or a single father. In China school uhm some other kids will talk about that and have some hard influence on the child mind” (Participant G, 2018). The child will be bullied for having parents who chose to divorce since being a single parent is so looked down upon, that they will be looked down upon and suffer the consequences as well. Due to all of the negative consequences, many people stay suffering in silence sadly.
Pattern 4: Gender Roles.

In addition to participants speaking out about why it is so difficult for Chinese and Chinese Americans to speak out, almost all discussed the gender roles ingrained in them due to their Asian cultural upbringing and experiences. Many also acknowledged that due to the common thought that men and sons are more important, this may lead to men justifying abusing their wives.

Many subjects felt there were similar ideas of what it meant to be a man or a woman in Chinese or Chinese American societies. As participant D explained:

I've learned that as a man you should take care of your family, your wife, your friends, pretty much anyone who you care about…the guys always the money the bread-maker in the family. I mean things are changing a little bit here in the U.S. and girls are having more say in what’s happening. But it’s not so much reflected in Asia…(2018).

Most participants were raised similar to Participant D in homes where their mothers were the caretakers and their fathers worked. This resulted in many participants feeling like they’ve learned through their experiences that a man’s role is to make the money and support the family financially, while the woman’s role is to take care of the kids. Even though these roles are changing in America, the change is not yet reflected in Asian societies or countries as this participant acknowledged. Another participant spoke about gender roles in a similar manner, and said that they thought it was part of why IPA was so prevalent in China. The subject stated that IPA probably occurs “because of the inequality between people, uhm males are always seen as the dominant person in the relationship, and also it depends on who makes more money honestly
because, you know, if you make more money you have more social power” (Participant D, 2018). They agreed that men are seen as dominant, make more money, and therefore have more social power. This heightened ideology that males are superior to females may lead men in Asian cultures with such deep patriarchal roots and beliefs to see IPA as something that keeps the woman subordinated and “puts her in her place” so to speak.

Other participants had similar views of how they came to know gender roles. Another participant again said that, “men are definitely expected to be more dominant in the relationship and women are expected to stay home and take care of the kids” (Participant C, 2018). He also stated that he felt this way because, “I guess I would say I learned the man works and the woman takes care of the family just cuz that's how it was growing up. My mom gave up work to raise us, and my dad stayed working” (Participant C, 2018). When I asked a participant how often they felt like they experienced this ideology they said that, “[a]ll the time. Gender roles all the time. Women were supposed to stay at home and take care of the kids and men were the providers” (Participant F, 2018). They felt they were constantly seeing this happening around them, and their parents felt that way as well and exemplified those roles, so it becomes easy to see how many can subconsciously adopt roles due to being brought up in an environment that seems to dictate the way certain genders are to live their lifestyles. I asked what would happen if the woman worked and made more money than the man, and a participant replied, “I would say the guy would be mad… I would say the girl probably look down him and his respect would be harmed in China” (Participant E, 2018). This illustrates the potential social consequences of defying gender role norms that might deter one from doing so.
One additional interesting finding that came up in multiple interviews when discussing gender roles was the idea that due to the One Child Policy and many people wanting sons, there are far fewer females than males. This is creating hardships for males trying to find potential life partners. Participant E explained that “They always want a son, a boy baby not a girl baby. Now gender role getting better since there less female in China. So it getting harder for male to find a partner so that's why the female status is higher…” (2018). The difficulty for males to find a female partner is contributing to raising the female status now in China according to multiple participants. Another participant who spoke about this agreed that there is “serious competition for male to find a partner… So like some TV shows, like contemporary TV shows, will show like violence or how high women's status is right now” (Participant E, 2018). It was interested to hear him explain the way television now portrays women slapping husbands with money and men having to submit to their wives and give them control of the family’s finances. This is an interesting demonstration of how important perceived financial control is in determining who holds the power in the relationship. While in some ways this will hopefully increase women’s status, it seems to be doing so by reversing the potential elements that leading to IPA and spousal abuse, and still promotes accepted images in Asian cultures of someone slapping someone.

*Pattern 5*: Particular stressors that might make it harder for immigrants to leave their abuser.

In addition to all of the information in the previous patterns that provide insight as to why it is particularly difficult for Chinese and Chinese American men and women to leave their abuser, there are particular stressors for immigrants or Chinese Americans that make it hard to leave their partners. The most salient stressor that came up was the language barrier. One participant noted that if you wanted to ask for help, you would have to be able to speak English
The other stressors and barriers that came up the most frequently were mental obstacles, feeling like they came all the way here and do not want to throw that away, difficulties finding a job, not wanting to upset their parents, and feelings of “otherness.”

Many participants felt as if immigrants who chose to leave behind their family and friends to come to America with their partner in search of a better life filled with more opportunities for them and their children or potential future children would have a very hard time leaving their spouse and their dreamed of future. One participant whose grandparents moved from China to Vietnam, whose parents later met in Vietnam and moved with him to the United States when the subject was younger spoke extensively about this. The participant explained that before they came here, everything was simpler, and although they were extremely poor, he would do anything to be able to go back to those times when they were all close and everyone was happier. The participant explained that his mom “said she was definitely happier when they were poorer, they were definitely happier when they were living in Vietnam for damn sure…ever since we moved here everything fell apart cuz everyone's always working and family’s not as tight as it used to be” (Participant D, 2018). He continued to explain that part of the reason was that his dad got a better job here in America, became busier, and started making more money. When his dad first started making more money, he began to abuse the subject’s mother and hold the money over her head. He went on to say:

He used to get drunk and beat her. It definitely has changed but the verbal abuse is still there. He stopped the physical abuse because he works a lot more. So ever since he worked more it stopped. The way I see it is that uhm my mom had every chance to leave
but she didn't. She stayed for me and my sister. She wanted to stay to be there to to watch us grow up and and be successful and have what she didn’t (Participant D, 2018).

The abuse stopped when his father began to work more and was unable to drink as much and didn’t have as much time to fight with her or physically abuse her. He still verbally abuses her however. He talked about giving his mother advice to leave, and how his family even had an intervention for her, but she was not willing to give up watching her children grow up and wanted to see them become successful and give them a life and opportunities for success that she didn’t have in Vietnam. In addition, if she were to leave, and “if she did throw all that away, she wouldn’t have anywhere to go” (Participant D, 2018). Even if she decided to leave, she would not have a place to go. Not having a place to go is a common obstacle many survivors experiencing IPA face when they are in a new country, barely speak English, have a hard time meeting people, do not have family near, and therefore have very little social support.

In addition to not wanting to throw away years of their lives, leaving behind their family, friends, and home country in pursuit of a better life that went awry, many immigrants find themselves having difficulty finding employment. The majority of participants listed this as one, or the only, stressor immigrants faced. Many of them explained that it’s not only difficult because of the language barrier, but there are significant difficulties due to visa policies. One participant who moved here from China, spoke fluent English, and studied at an American university commented, “it’s really hard even for me to find job because of something about [my] visa” (Participant B, 2018). She acknowledged that if it was so difficult for her to find any employment opportunity, it must be extremely stressful for immigrants who do not yet understand American culture, speak English, or speak broken English.
Another stressor mentioned was not wanting to upset your parents or family members by wanting to leave their abuser. As previously mentioned, divorce is heavily frowned upon, as is making your children have a single mother and a single father, and going against collectivist ideals of putting the family’s needs and harmony before your own. Parents play a huge role in their child’s marriage, and in some cases for participants even try to arrange them. Admitting to your parents that you have been abused and want to leave your spouse might come across as disrespecting their opinions. Disrespecting your elders and parents is something that is not taken lightly in Asian cultures as participants mentioned the importance of this. When asking a participant if they felt like marriage was something important, they stated “my mother talk that to me, my mother think that I should find her, firstly she should be satisfied with her…” (Participant H, 2018). The subject’s mother made it clear that her approval and satisfaction with his choice of partner was the most important thing so, a person experiencing abuse might fear their parents saying that they are being dramatic or exaggerating what is going on because they met the person and decided they were a good choice of mate. There could also be potential fear that the parents will convince them to stay because of the positive view they saw the partner in and the stigma attached to divorce, again resulting in low social/familial support. Another subject commented, “[i]f you want to get divorce, it's easy. But you have to care for your children and things like that and your family like older generations like your parents will convince you to not get divorced” (Participant B, 2018). While she mentioned previously that for her generation it might be different, she realized that divorce is something technically easy, but it becomes difficult and complicated when your family is willing you to stay in the relationship and not get divorced and embarrass the family name.
The last prominent theme I would like to discuss is participants feeling like they are “othered” and therefore would not feel comfortable asking an American law enforcement officer or any American in general for help. Participant E said that “I thought people are more open here, but actually they don’t know much about us or the outside world. Maybe we should tell like let them know more than this” (2018). They were surprised to find how ignorant people were in regards to Asian culture and the rest of the world outside of America. The subject felt that maybe we [people of Chinese ethnicity] should inform mainstream society about their culture. This thesis is part of aiming to do so through recognition of cultural norms, traditional family structures, gender roles, and how these all intersect to create complexities for immigrants, complexities that lead to social problems such as IPA. Another participant said that “Yea, it’d be hard for them to speak about it [IPA] because they feel like because they’re different they can’t speak to an actual American and have them sympathize with them because they’ve never been through it” (Participant D, 2018). Feeling a lack of understanding and sympathy towards one another seems to be creating a division between cultures that in turn is creating barriers for individuals experiencing IPA. The “othering” of Americans by Chinese and/or Chinese Americans due to their feelings of being “othered” by Americans makes it hard for these immigrants to feel comfortable speaking to an American and insecure that they will understand. If immigrants do not feel like Americans can relate or sympathize with them, it would be difficult to reach out to one for support, advice, or help.
CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Discussion

While there were many findings that resulted from the current study’s data analysis, the qualitative data overall support my initial predictions. The results indicated a trend toward a positive relationship between acculturation and attitudes towards marriage. The data showed that the more acculturated the individuals were, the more positively they felt towards marriage. My second prediction that individuals who are more acculturated and feel more positively towards marriage would have a significant effect on the individual's perception of intimate partner abuse was not able to be statistically analyzed. From the combination of my statistical data and my quantitative data however, the hypothesis was supported. Participants who were more acculturated and had more positive views towards marriage also advised that a person in an abusive relationship should get a divorce, and also perceived IPA in a more serious and negative manner. It was also indicated from running additional statistical tests that males felt more positively towards marriage, which makes sense in terms of previous research and Chinese cultural values that men are the head of the family and have more control over decisions such as finances. It is fitting with existing literature that Asian men would feel more positively towards marriage than Asian women who tend to give up more and become domestic and more submissive to their husbands when they get married. It also makes sense that women would hold a more negative attitude if they believe that due to cultural gender roles, they will have a child and have to give up the previous life to be the caretaker. In addition, there was also a significant difference in acculturation scores by gender. Males tended to be more acculturated than the women. This could potentially be due to participants being raised in China and adhering to
gender norms resulting in the women being more passive and timid in a new country than their male counterparts, who were raised to feel superior and powerful in their masculinity.

The qualitative findings fit with previous research as well. The patterns of IPA being more prevalent but also more accepted and more silenced, the cultural importance of marriage, the stigmatization of getting a divorce, the emphasis on collectivist cultural tenets, the prevalence of gender roles, and the difficulty upsetting family members of older generations are all themes that have been studied in previous literature and again emerged in this study. Therefore, the qualitative results were not surprising, but more saddening that throughout time the studies continue to yield similar findings, implying that there is not much change actually occurring in China or within Chinese American families or communities. This is not to discredit change that has occurred, as several subjects mentioned that with each generation being exposed to the internet since the opening of China, individuals are becoming more open minded, but that it just is a process that will take time due to such deep cultural roots. The barriers identified in the current study are barriers that have all been identified in previous literature and studies. It is time to stop acknowledging the barriers that exist and start focusing on ways to break them down. Further research is merited to determine the most effective and efficient ways to do so.

**Limitations of the Study**

While this study was overall strong, there were a few noteworthy limitations. One of them was that there was a small sample size due to difficulty finding such specific enrollment criteria. I felt passionately about keeping my participants Chinese or Chinese American as I have spent many years studying Chinese culture due to it being one of my minors. Another limitation was that there was somewhat little variation between generations since almost all participants
were born and raised in China until high school or college when they moved here, so I was not able to establish enough of a statistically significant relationship to support my original hypothesis that there would be a significant effect between acculturation and attitudes towards marriage. The small sample size also led to a small age range, 20-23. Had there been a larger age range, the study would have been more representative. There was also a chance that since English was many participants’ first language, they were not able to fully express as much as they would have liked. There is also a chance that they might be nervous to open honestly due to fear of painting their culture in a negative light, or responding in a way that they might think an American would want to hear, although I do not believe the latter was the case. Even though there were a few limitations, there were many strengths to the study.

**Strengths of the Study**

Even though the study had some potential limitations, there were many strengths. The first and most important strength of the study was that although it did not have a large sample size, it did contribute to filling a major void in research and give insight on potential areas of focus for future research. Another strength of the study was that it had a equal number of males and females in the survey portion, and a somewhat equal number of male and females in the interview portion, so I was able to examine gender differences in statistical relationships as well as in the narratives of the participants. I was able to draw many meaningful conclusions based off of gender differences among the subjects using effect sizes since my sample size was small. Another strength was that there was a mix of participants born and raised in China and participants born in the United States. Due to this difference, I was able to look at how generation potentially played a role in responses and narratives even though there was not a
significant correlation between generation and attitudes towards marriage. It was also good to have a variety of cultural upbringings, and a variation of how much Chinese culture played a role in their upbringings. In addition, it was a strength that the study was able to enroll Chinese natives that were able to speak enough English to participate even though they were immersed in Chinese culture almost all of their lives. This provides accuracy, which was reflected in the patterns of responses and in the patterns that were similarly found in previous studies mentioned in the literature review chapter. Although there were more strengths that could be mentioned, the last one I will discuss is that I attended classes with some of the participants, so they might have felt more comfortable giving honest answers than they would have to a stranger with no known knowledge of Chinese culture, societal values, and norms. The participants were all happy to participate in meaningful research as all of them had known someone or multiple people who have experienced DV/IPA, so they all tried to answer to the fullest extent of their knowledge. For participants whose family members have experienced spousal abuse, they felt very passionately about contributing to data that could potentially help others and encourage others to speak out and ask for help. They all felt this was a topic previously silenced, but was a topic that should be discussed

**Future Research**

While this study is a step in an important direction, future research is much needed. The relationship/correlation between generations, acculturation, and attitude towards marriage is something that should be further examined with a larger number of participants. It would also be interesting to conduct a replica or similar study to this one, but in China to further examine the effects of acculturation and “Americanization” on participate responses and ideas.
Due to the patterns analyzed in my quantitative analysis, I think future research and attention should be dedicated to finding better ways to elevate the female status in China, and in the U.S., or conduct research on how to better go about implementing strategies to equalize male and female status. In America however, more research should be dedicated to bridging the gap between Americans and Chinese or Chinese American immigrants that the participants spoke about. Studies should be done across a wide range of subjects to verify if this is a common feeling among immigrants, and if it is something that deters individuals experiencing IPA, or who previously have, and how they would recommend mending that divide. While it will take a lot of research to understand how to get Americans and Chinese or Chinese Americans to better understand each other and facilitate this understanding, the data will give vast insight on how to better help Chinese and Chinese American immigrant men and women experiencing IPA in the aims of eventually preventing it from occurring.

In addition, the current study was unable to enroll individuals of “vulnerable populations,” and did not ask if participant’s themselves were ever abused. Therefore, no individuals were able to be recruited from organizations for victim support or legal organizations who had been contacted by survivors of IPA and spousal abuse. It would be great to have further studies follow Kim and Sung’s (2015) study and enroll individuals with first hand experience but also take into consideration attitudes towards marriage. Overall, any future research touching on any of these subjects will contribute to meaningful data and a meaningful cause, however, it is my recommendation that future research include participants and investigators who can conduct the entire process in Chinese to ensure that the participants are able to fully express their thoughts on the matters at hand.
Conclusions

Overall, it was an honor to contribute to such meaningful research. While it was shown in the results that acculturation plays a role in attitudes towards marriage, and those two interact and affect the way individuals perceive intimate partner abuse, there is much more work to be done. It is important to reiterate the fact that every single participant has experienced a relationship where IPA has occurred or is still occurring. We owe it to all of the minority individuals suffering feeling silenced by their culture to continue to examine the most effective ways of breaking down the internal and external barriers in the United States that are preventing survivors from reaching out and seeking help. Work such as this thesis is important to collect and analyze as many patterns from as many individuals as possible to ultimately make lasting and effective changes. While there are organizations available for survivors of IPA, if Chinese or Chinese American immigrant men and women feel “othered” by American society, feel judged, and feel misunderstood, something must be done. It is my hope that this research contributes to understanding the unique experiences these individuals face, starts filling the void in research, and inspires others to further research this topic. It is my hope that for individuals who may read this and are suffering in silence, they feel a sense of connectedness and like they are not alone. It is also my hope that this thesis contributes to eventually finding a way of preventing IPA occurring among Chinese and Chinese American immigrants and survivors as a whole. It is time for individuals to step up, conduct further research, break down barriers, and begin to unify this country founded by immigrants. Knowing the data published by numerous studies, it is the responsibility of every single individual who is aware of what is occurring in this nation and overseas not to turn a blind eye to the horrifically prevalent amounts of abuse occurring among
minority groups and do something about that. Whether that be educating others, becoming informed in immigrant policies, having a conversation with someone of a minority group and taking time to get to know them and their experiences, or conducting further research. It is time for discourse surrounding domestic violence to become inclusive of all genders, races, and ethnicities, specifically Chinese and Chinese American immigrant men and women. If nothing else, I hope at least one person hears this call to action.
References


Domestic Abuse Intervention Project. (n.d.). *Power and control wheel.* Duluth:


Appendix. Interview Questions

Interview Schedule and Questions

*Chinese American Immigrants and Perceptions of Intimate Partner Abuse*

**Demographic Questions:**

1. How old are you?
2. Where in China are you/your family from?
3. When did you/your family first come to the United States?
4. Are you currently, or have you previously been married?
5. How would you describe your current relationship status?
6. Do you have any children?
7. Do you consider yourself religious and/or spiritual? If so, can you tell me about your practices?

**Childhood/adolescent Background:**

Now I’m going to move on to asking you some questions about your life growing up.

1. What do you remember about your home life growing up?
2. Where did you grow up?
3. What was your home like?
4. What was your neighborhood like?
5. Did you ever play with any of the other children in the neighborhood?
6. What would you and your friends or schoolmates do for fun?
7. When did you begin going to school?
8. What was the highest form of education you received?
9. Did you like school? Was there any subject you liked the best or disliked the most?
10. Did you do any sports or play any instruments growing up?
11. What did you like to do in your free time?
12. What were your parents like?
13. Did they have a happy marriage?
14. How did they meet?
15. Do you remember them ever talking to you about marriage when you were growing up?
   If so, what type of things did they say?
16. Did/do your parents work?
17. How would you describe your family?
18. How would you describe your family and neighborhood socioeconomic status growing up? Would you describe your family and neighborhood as more upper, middle, lower, working class or in poverty growing up? Has that changed since then?
19. How does your socioeconomic status growing up compare to your current status?
20. Do you feel like there were important values or messages about the world your parents emphasized?
21. Do you feel like there were messages about what it meant to be a woman or a man in the world you lived in? If so, what were they? How did you understand a woman's role versus a man’s role in society growing up?
22. Had you ever heard the term “domestic violence” growing up? Was it ever something you were informed about?

Recent and Current Life Events:

Now I’m going to move on to discussing your more recent lifestyle. Remember you can skip any questions or stop the interview any time you’d like.

23. What has been the hardest part about transitioning to a Western culture for you?
24. Do you feel like living in America has challenged your values or beliefs about anything at all?
25. What has been the best part, if there is one, about living in America for you?
26. How would you describe the area you live in now?
27. Do you have close neighbors, friends, or family living near you?
28. How is your current lifestyle different than the one you grew up in? (If it is).
29. Do people talk differently about marriage here than they did in China?
30. Have you known anyone who’s had trouble with their marriages?
31. Do you know anyone who has experienced domestic violence or spousal abuse?
32. Do you know if they ended up leaving or staying with their abuser?
33. If you feel comfortable sharing, how did they describe their relationship to you?
34. What advice, if any, did you give them or wish you had given them?
35. Do you feel like domestic violence is common among immigrants? If so, any ideas why?
36. If a Chinese American immigrant is in a relationship where they experience domestic violence, do you think it would be particularly difficult to speak out about it because of traditional cultural values in China?
37. Would you say Chinese families, on average, value privacy more than their American counterparts?
38. Do you feel like domestic violence is something that should be talked about?
39. Are there any particular risks to immigrants that might trigger tension among spouses?
40. Have any of your values changed from when you were growing up?
41. Do you feel like you hold more traditional or liberal beliefs towards marriage?
42. How have your experiences affected those beliefs, if they have?
43. If you could give advice to a married man or woman experiencing intimate partner abuse, what would you tell them?
Table 1. Means (SD) by sex for Suinn-Lew Self-Acculturation Scores and Marriage Attitudes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Mean (SD) Males</th>
<th>Mean (SD) Females</th>
<th>Effect size</th>
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</thead>
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<td>Suinn-Self Acculturation Scores</td>
<td>3.03 (.87)</td>
<td>2.13 (.65)</td>
<td>1.17 (large effect)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marriage Attitudes</td>
<td>4.63 (.67)</td>
<td>4.13 (.77)</td>
<td>.69 (medium to large effect)</td>
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