

BRIEF REPORTS

Ethnicity, Desirable Responding, and Self-Reports of Abuse: A Comparison of European- and Asian-Ancestry Undergraduates

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One thousand fifty-two (582 non-Asian, 470 Asian) university students were assessed regarding levels of physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse, neglect, and socially desirable responding. Differences between Asian-ancestry and European-ancestry students in self-reported incidence and expression of abuse were evaluated, as was gender and the relation between self-reported abuse and socially desirable responding. Asian-ancestry men and women reported higher levels of physical abuse, emotional abuse, and neglect than did their Euro-ancestry counterparts, and Euro-ancestry women reported a higher incidence of sexual abuse than did Asian-ancestry women. Across ethnicity, men reported higher levels of physical abuse and neglect but lower levels of sexual abuse than did women. Socially desirable responding was not related to measures of abuse. Findings are discussed in terms of cultural influences on child-rearing and disciplinary practices.

Since the publication of “The Battered Child Syndrome” in 1962 (Kempe, Silverman, Steele, Droegemueller, & Silver, 1962), a remarkably large number of studies on child maltreatment has emerged. In a recent review, Knutson and Scharztz (1994) identified over 1,250 articles since 1972 that pertained specifically to childhood physical abuse and neglect. Despite the abundance of research in this area, with few notable exceptions (e.g., Korbin, 1980; Lindholm & Willey, 1986), surprisingly little research has focused specifically on the role of culture in self-reports of abuse. Although numerous studies (e.g., Gil, 1970; Pelton, 1978) have documented an overrepresentation of ethnic minority groups among victims of abuse in the United States, few inferences can be drawn from such studies because of the frequent confounding of ethnicity with social class (Hampton, 1987). Examination of whether manifestations of child maltreatment differ as a function of ethnicity is important for understanding the effects of cultural norms and values on childhood abuse and for designing culturally appropriate prevention programs.

The present investigation examined potential differences be-

tween Southeast Asian-ancestry and European-ancestry university students in the incidence and expression of childhood or adolescent abuse and neglect histories. Potential ethnic differences in subjective perceptions of abuse were also examined, as were gender differences in both objectively (i.e., specific acts) and subjectively (i.e., self-perceptions) defined measures of abuse. On the basis of research that has noted fundamental differences in family values and child-rearing practices between Eastern and Western cultures (e.g., Lui, 1991), it was expected that Asian-ancestry persons would differ from their Euro-ancestry counterparts in the specific forms of childhood abuse and neglect experienced. In addition, because authoritarian parenting styles that involve physical and emotional disciplinary practices are more characteristic of Southeast Asian than Western child rearing (Morrow, 1989), it was expected that Asians who experienced such acts would be less likely than non-Asians to subjectively perceive themselves as having been abused.

The differences in family systems between Eastern and Western cultures may best be understood in terms of differences between collectivist (e.g., Asian) versus individualist (e.g., Western) value orientations (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Briefly, collectivist orientations tend to stress social harmony, fitting in, and propriety; individualist orientations tend to stress uniqueness, self-reliance, and self-expression (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Such value orientations are reflected in child-rearing and disciplinary practices. As noted by Morrow (1989), American parents foster self-reliance, speaking one’s mind, and looking out for oneself. Southeast Asian parents, on the other hand, teach their children to view their role within the family and society in terms of relationships and obligations. The individual defers his or her desires to the family (Ho,

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1988), and only those behaviors that maintain and improve the family name are considered valuable (Morrow, 1989). This tradition of filial piety dates back to the 1st millennium BC, and many scholars believe that it still largely embraces the Chinese culture system and functions as the pivot of social order in Chinese society (Wu, 1981).

To ensure filial piety, two mechanisms are emphasized in child rearing: the promotion of physical and emotional closeness during infancy so that a lifelong bond is assured and the maintenance of parental authority through firm discipline (Wu, 1981). With regard to the latter of these, from the age of about 6 years when the child begins to "understand things," it is believed that discipline is not only necessary but essential to prevent the child from becoming a delinquent. As noted by Wu, the most "abusive" parent is one who does not properly discipline his or her child, and consequently, "drowns the child with love." Along with this, Chan (1986) cited the "pride and shame" principle whereby individual behaviors, both positive and negative, are said to reflect the entire family. Parents emphasize the distress and embarrassment felt by others when unacceptable behaviors occur, and shame, scolding, and other measures of guilt induction that result in "loss of face" by the child are reported to be common forms of punishment (Morrow, 1989). In an extensive field survey of child abuse in Taiwan, Wu noted that, among Chinese parents, the most favored punitive method, aside from beating and scolding, was to order the child to kneel down for a period of time in view of passersby. This was believed to be effective for promoting respectful behavior because of the public shame involved. Research suggests that this value of filial piety fosters stricter child-rearing practices among Southeast Asian than White parents (e.g., Chiu, 1987); however, it is important to keep in mind that there is wide variability in parenting styles between ethnic Asian subgroups (Lui, 1991), and such generalizations must be made with caution.

A secondary purpose of the present study was to examine what relationships exist between self-reported early abuse and measures of socially desirable responding when collected under well-controlled, anonymous testing conditions. Examining these relationships would provide insight into whether response biases play a role in self-report abuse data and, if so, whether they differ as a function of ethnicity. Because of the high value placed on preserving family honor, it was predicted that Asian-ancestry individuals may be less likely than their European counterparts to report having experienced various forms of childhood abuse.

Method

Participants

One thousand fifty-two University of British Columbia undergraduate volunteers (383 men, 669 women) completed this study in exchange for introductory psychology course credit. The study was conducted between November 1993 and July 1996. Participants were recruited through a psychology department research participant pool and through verbal requests made to introductory psychology courses by the experimenters. Participants were told that the purpose of the study was to explore social attitudes, sexuality, and family values in an ethnically diverse university population. Ethnic composition of the sample was approximately 43% Asian ancestry and 57% European ancestry. For the purposes of simplicity and brevity, here and throughout this article, East and Southeast Asian-ancestry persons are referred to as Asians; all other individuals are referred

to as non-Asians. Approximately 85% of the Asian subsample was ethnic Chinese. The remaining 15% of Asian respondents endorsed their ethnicity as Hong Kong, Japanese, Korean, Filipino, Taiwanese, or Vietnamese. Among non-Asians, approximately 84% listed English as their first language, and 83% listed Canada as their country of birth. Maximum final sample sizes, grouped by gender and ethnicity, were 278 Asian women, 391 non-Asian women, 192 Asian men, and 191 Non-Asian men. Participants ranged in age from 17 to 48 years, with 92% between the ages of 18 and 25 years. Mean age of each of the four subsamples was 20.3 years for non-Asian women, 20.8 years for non-Asian men, 19.7 years for Asian women, and 19.7 years for Asian men. Approximately 29% of Asians were born in Canada, 45% were recent immigrants (i.e., 5 years or fewer in Canada), and 26% were long-term immigrants (i.e., more than 5 years in Canada).

Measures

Abuse measures. We assessed levels of abuse using the childhood and adolescent sections of the Emotional and Physical Abuse Questionnaire (Carlin et al., 1994). This scale consists of 32 abuse items that range in severity from relatively common (e.g., "I was shaken") to relatively severe (e.g., "I have had broken bones following a beating") forms of abuse. On the basis of the consensus of 15 professional psychologists not associated with the present study, items were grouped into the following three categories: physical abuse (13 items, e.g., "I was tied-up as punishment" and "I was thrown against objects, walls, or down stairs"), emotional abuse (9 items, e.g., "I was threatened with desertion" and "I was mocked or taunted"), and neglect (6 items, e.g., "I was dressed in dirty, ragged, or inappropriate clothes" and "I was left home alone for long periods of time"). Items that did not logically fit into either category of abuse (i.e., 4 items) were excluded from further analysis. Participants were asked to indicate on a 6-point scale ranging from 0 (*never*) to 5 (*very frequently*) the frequency with which they experienced each of these items. We formed abuse composites by summing responses to the items included in each respective composite. Coefficient alpha reliability estimates based on the present sample were .81, .80, and .65 for non-Asian men; .82, .87, and .65 for non-Asian women; .76, .77, and .46 for Asian men; and .80, .83, and .44 for Asian women for physical abuse, emotional abuse, and neglect, respectively.

We derived a sexual abuse composite score using the Sexual Abuse Questionnaire (Carlin & Ward, 1992). A positive endorsement (*yes*) to the question "I have been casually touched, pinched, or fondled in a sexual manner when I did not want that to happen" was scored as 1; positive endorsements to acts that involved unwanted long-term sexual touching, genital or breast touching or being forced to touch or fondle another person's genitals were each scored as 2; and positive endorsements to acts involving unwanted oral-genital sex or sexual intercourse were each scored as 4. Coefficient alpha reliability estimates based on the present sample were .79 for non-Asian men, .79 for non-Asian women, .61 for Asian men, and .69 for Asian women. For all abuse measures, only experiences that participants reported occurring in either childhood or adolescence (defined on the questionnaires as those acts that occurred before age 18) were included in the composite scoring.

Subjective perceptions of abuse. We assessed subjective perceptions of physical abuse and emotional abuse using the following question: "I consider myself to have been physically [emotionally] abused as a child (1–11 years) or as an adolescent (12–17 years)." Participants were asked to indicate on a 4-point scale ranging from 0 (*not at all*) to 3 (*at times, severely*) the degree to which they agreed with this statement. We assessed subjective perceptions of sexual abuse using the question "I believe I have been sexually abused." Participants responded to this question on a yes or no basis.

Socially desirable responding. We assessed response biases using the Balanced Inventory of Desirable Responding (BIDR; Paulhus, 1998). The BIDR consists of two relatively independent 20-item measures of the

tendency to give socially desirable or undesirable responses on self-reports. The Self-Deceptive Enhancement (SDE) subscale indexes the tendency to give honest but unconsciously inflated self-descriptions (e.g., "It's all right with me if some people happen to dislike me"). The Impression Management (IM) subscale is sensitive to the tendency to give inflated self-descriptions consciously (e.g., "I sometimes tell lies if I have to"). Respondents rate their agreement with items on 7-point scales ranging from 1 (*not true*) to 7 (*very true*). We scored responses using Paulhus's (1989) dichotomous scoring procedure. Coefficient alpha reliability estimates based on the present sample were .64, and .81 for non-Asian men, .75 and .83 for non-Asian women, .65 and .79 for Asian men, and .68, and .80 for Asian women for the SDE and IM subscales, respectively. These values are comparable with those reported by Paulhus (1991); i.e., .68 to .80 for the SDE subscale and .75 to .86 for the IM subscale. Paulhus (1991) reported test-retest correlations (based on a 5-week interval) of .69 and .65 for the SDE and IM subscales, respectively. Lai and Linden (1993) reported no significant differences in SDE or IM scores between persons of Asian and European ancestry, and Paulhus, Yik, and Lysy (1993) reported no significant differences in the relationship between either the SDE or IM subscale and personality measures between Asian and Caucasian university students.

Procedure

Participants completed the BDR-6 and additional measures not relevant to the present study on a voluntary, take-home basis. Between 1 and 2 weeks later, participants handed in their questionnaires and completed the abuse measures in same-gender groups of 5–10 individuals in a large testing room arranged to provide maximum privacy (e.g., visual barriers between participants). The sexual abuse questionnaire was not administered to the first 187 participants who completed the study (maximum n for sexual abuse measures = 865). A same-gender researcher was present to provide instructions and to answer any questions. Testing conditions were made anonymous by requesting that no personally identifying information be placed on the forms and by using a randomly selected number for participant identification across the two sessions. In addition, anonymity was stressed verbally and by requesting that participants fold their completed forms, seal them in a blank envelope, and deposit the envelope in a large drop box on test completion.

Results

The mean age for Asians was significantly lower than that for non-Asians, $F(1, 1014) = 15.04, p < .001$, in the present sample, but there were no significant correlations between age and physical abuse, emotional abuse, or neglect among Asian women or men and no significant correlation between age and physical abuse or neglect among non-Asian women or men. There were, however, modest, but statistically significant, correlations between age and emotional abuse among both non-Asian men, $r(168) = .16, p = .04$, and women, $r(368) = .20, p < .001$. Therefore, age of participants was statistically controlled in all analyses of emotional abuse that included non-Asian men, women, or both men and women.

Ethnic and Gender Differences in Self-Reported Incidence of Abuse

Fifty-one percent of non-Asian women, 69% of Asian women, 71% of non-Asian men, and 82% of Asian men endorsed one or more of the physical abuse items. Severe physical abuse (defined here as the endorsement of one or more of the severe physical items, e.g., "I have received black eyes from being hit," "I was

injured seriously enough by a parent or guardian to require medical care," and "I have had broken bones following a beating") was reported by 10%, 19%, 14%, and 34% of non-Asian women, Asian women, non-Asian men, and Asian men, respectively. Thirty-two percent of non-Asian women, 46% of Asian women, 46% of non-Asian men, and 64% of Asian men endorsed one or more of the neglect items. Severe neglect (defined here as the endorsement of one or more of the severe neglect items, e.g., "I was locked out of the house without sufficient or appropriate clothes or shoes in the winter" and "I have had food or water withheld from me for more than a day") was reported by 9%, 18%, 18% and 32% of non-Asian women, Asian women, non-Asian men, and Asian men, respectively. Seventy percent of non-Asian women, 88% of Asian women, 81% of non-Asian men, and 93% of Asian men endorsed one or more of the emotional abuse items. Severe emotional abuse (defined here as an emotional abuse composite score of greater than 10) was reported by 25%, 39%, 25%, and 53% of non-Asian women, Asian women, non-Asian men, and Asian men, respectively. One or more of the six sexual abuse items were endorsed by 40%, 25%, 11%, and 11% of non-Asian women, Asian women, non-Asian men, and Asian men, respectively. Being forced to have sexual intercourse was endorsed by 9%, 4%, 1%, and 1% of non-Asian women, Asian women, non-Asian men, and Asian men, respectively.

Four 2×2 (Ethnicity \times Gender) analyses of variance (ANOVAs) were conducted separately for each of the abuse composite scores. Results indicated significant ethnic, $F(1, 988) = 20.67, p < .001$, and gender, $F(1, 988) = 17.73, p < .001$, differences in reports of physical abuse, and significant ethnic, $F(1, 987) = 21.73, p < .001$, and gender, $F(1, 987) = 15.90, p < .001$, differences in reports of neglect. Results for emotional abuse revealed significant ethnic, $F(1, 985) = 65.89, p < .001$, but not gender, $F(1, 985) = 3.74, p = .06$, differences. With respect to incidence of sexual abuse, there were significant ethnic, $F(1, 861) = 5.19, p = .023$, and gender, $F(1, 861) = 50.53, p < .001$, differences, and a significant interaction between gender and ethnicity, $F(1, 861) = 6.72, p = .01$. Follow-up analyses conducted using Tukey's honestly significant difference test revealed significant ethnic differences between female Asians and non-Asians and significant gender differences among both Asians and non-Asians. There were no significant differences between male Asians and non-Asians in the incidence of sexual abuse. These results suggest a higher incidence of physical abuse, emotional abuse, and neglect among Asians, and a lower incidence of sexual abuse among Asian than non-Asian women. The results also indicate a higher incidence of physical abuse and neglect and a lower incidence of sexual abuse among men than women. There were no significant correlations ($p < .05$) between length of residency in Canada and measures of abuse among either men or women. (See Table 1 for composite means and standard deviations [by ethnicity and gender], mean differences, and 95% confidence intervals for ethnic differences in abuse.)

Social Desirability and Self-Reported Abuse

Separate Pearson correlations were calculated between the SDE and IM subscales and each of the abuse composite scores within each of the Ethnic \times Gender subgroups. Because of accumulating Type I error on mean comparisons across the eight variables (four

Table 1
Ethnic and Gender Differences in Ratings of Physical Abuse, Emotional Abuse, Sexual Abuse, and Neglect

Variable	Non-Asian women		Asian women		MD	95% CI	Non-Asian men		Asian men		MD	95% CI
	M	SD	M	SD			M	SD	M	SD		
Physical abuse	2.41	4.55	3.73	5.14	-1.32	-2.11 to -0.54	3.52	5.30	5.41	5.45	-1.90	-3.01 to -0.79
Emotional abuse	7.94	6.63	10.80	7.22	-2.86	-3.95 to -1.74	8.04	5.81	12.43	7.03	-4.39	-5.73 to -3.06
Sexual abuse	0.80	1.07	0.50	0.90	0.31	-0.14 to 0.47	0.19	0.60	0.21	0.60	0.02	-0.16 to 0.12
Neglect	0.80	1.62	1.37	2.20	-0.57	-0.89 to -0.26	1.28	2.44	2.00	2.38	-0.72	-1.22 to -0.22

Note. Maximum $n = 391, 278, 191,$ and 192 for non-Asian women, Asian women, non-Asian men, and Asian men, respectively, for physical abuse, emotional abuse, and neglect. Maximum $n = 319, 244, 246,$ and 156 for non-Asian women, Asian women, non-Asian men, and Asian men, respectively, for sexual abuse. MD = mean difference between ethnic groups; CI = confidence interval.

abuse variables \times two social desirability measures), only differences on $p < .006$ ($p < .05/8$) should be considered statistically reliable. With the exception of a significant correlation between the SDE subscale and reports of emotional abuse for Asian women, $r(160) = -.27, p = .001$, there were no significant correlations between the SDE or IM subscale and any of the abuse composites.¹ These findings suggest that self-reported abuse data, when collected under anonymous testing conditions, do not appear to be particularly subject to social desirability biases.

Ethnic and Gender Differences in Self-Reported Perceptions of Abuse

Separate 2×2 (Ethnicity \times Gender) ANOVAs examined whether there were ethnic or gender differences in subjective evaluations of having been abused. Results indicated significant ethnic, $F(1, 1048) = 9.75, p = .002$, but not gender, $F(1, 1048) = 2.17, p = .141$, differences in subjective perceptions of physical abuse; significant ethnic, $F(1, 1048) = 10.92, p = .001$, but not gender, $F(1, 1048) = 0.04, p = .846$, differences in subjective perceptions of emotional abuse; and significant gender, $F(1, 844) = 36.20, p < .001$, but not ethnic, $F(1, 844) = 2.34, p = .126$, differences in subjective perceptions of sexual abuse. These results suggest a higher incidence of subjective perceptions of physical and emotional abuse among Asian than non-Asian persons and a higher incidence of subjective perceptions of sexual abuse among women than men.

Separate Pearson correlations were calculated between composite scores and subjective perceptions of physical, emotional, and sexual abuse within each of the Ethnic \times Gender subgroups. Because of accumulating Type I error on mean comparisons across variables, only differences of $p < .004$ ($p < .05/12$) should be considered statistically reliable. Results revealed significant correlations between composite and subjective perceptions of physical abuse among non-Asian men, $r(184) = .27, p < .001$, Asian men, $r(179) = .41, p < .001$, non-Asian women, $r(371) = .46, p < .001$, and Asian women, $r(258) = .39, p < .001$, and between composite and subjective perceptions of emotional abuse among non-Asian men, $r(183) = .46, p < .001$, Asian men, $r(178) = .49, p < .001$, non-Asian women, $r(370) = .59, p < .001$, and Asian women, $r(258) = .55, p < .001$. Subjective perceptions of sexual abuse were significantly related to composite sexual abuse scores among non-Asian men, $r(142) = .50, p < .001$, Asian men,

$r(150) = .31, p < .001$, non-Asian women, $r(311) = .61, p < .001$, and Asian women, $r(241) = .48, p < .001$.

Discussion

Findings from this study indicate a higher incidence of self-reported physical abuse, emotional abuse, and neglect among Asian than non-Asian university men and women. These ethnic differences may best be understood in terms of Asian and Western child-rearing practices and philosophies. As noted earlier, in contrast to the American emphasis on egocentric, independent behavior, Southeast Asian children are trained to think of the family first and are expected to act in an unquestioningly loyal and obedient manner toward their parents (Morrow, 1989). The higher incidence among Asians of items such as "I was ridiculed in front of friends or strangers" and "My achievements or contributions were [not] praised and appreciated" is in keeping with the Southeast Asian tradition of using shame to shape behavior and with the general downplaying of children's accomplishments by Asian parents.

The higher rate of physical and emotional abuse noted among Asian persons in the present study may also be partially attributable to minority group pressures. Although East and Southeast Asians currently represent the largest immigrant group in Canada (Statistics Canada, 1992), the stressors of living as a minority in the dominant culture cannot be denied (e.g., Levinson, 1989). Asian immigrants face language difficulties, unfamiliar role expectations, conflicts due to clashing value systems, and numerous stresses inherent in trying to reconcile different cultural systems (e.g., Abe & Zane, 1990). Sue (1977) outlined a number of reasons why Asian immigrants in America commonly experience feelings of helplessness and how these feelings may lead to expressions of anxiety, anger, and hostility. It may be the case that the higher incidence of abuse among Asians in the present study represents, at least in part, common intergenerational differences and struggles that have become intensified secondary to these minority group stressors. If this were solely the case, however, one would expect there to be a higher incidence of early abuse among Canadian-born Asians, who were raised as a minority culture, than recent Asian immigrants who spent the majority of their childhood and adolescent years in a dominant culture. In the present study, length of

¹ Individual correlations are available from Cindy M. Meston on request.

residency in Canada among Asians was unrelated to the incidence of childhood or adolescent abuse.

The finding that Asian women reported a lower incidence of sexual abuse than did non-Asian women is consistent with prevalence sex abuse statistics, which have shown that Blacks and Whites are overrepresented and Asians are underrepresented relative to the ethnic or racial distribution (Rao, DiClemente, & Ponton, 1992). One possible explanation for this ethnic difference is that it reflects cultural differences in sexual restraint. In an extensive study of sexuality among Asian students in Canada, Meston, Trapnell, and Gorzalka (1996, 1998) found that Asian persons were significantly more sexually conservative and less sexually experienced than their non-Asian counterparts. Whether this sexual conservatism may result in lower rates of sexual assault among Asian than non-Asian persons is a topic for future research.

An alternative explanation for the lower incidence of sexual abuse among Asians is that Asians may have a greater reluctance to report being abused. Although it is true that Asians endorsed a high incidence of behaviors defined in the present study as physically and emotionally abusive, many of these behaviors may be considered acceptable child-rearing practices within traditional Asian society. Thus, compared with sexual abuse, acts of physical or emotional punishment may not be as prone to reporting biases. Consistent with this hypothesis, in a study of sexual abuse among Asian refugees, Wong (1987) reported that most participants stated that they would respond to sexual abuse in their own family by keeping it a family secret for fear of blame and rejection by their community. Inconsistent with this hypothesis is the finding in our study that willingness to report sexual abuse was unrelated to measures of social desirability.

In addition to reporting a higher incidence of physical and emotional abuse, Asians were more likely than their non-Asian counterparts to perceive themselves as having been physically and emotionally abused. Moreover, significant correlations were noted between composite and subjective perceptions of physical and emotional abuse among both Asian and non-Asian persons. We had expected that Asians who experienced such acts would be less likely than their non-Asian counterparts to perceive themselves as having been abused, given that harsh parental discipline is considered much more essential to proper parenting among Southeast Asian than Western persons. Our findings suggest that even though acts of harsh discipline may be accepted within the bounds of proper parenting styles among Asians, offspring still perceive and experience them as abusive acts. This finding has important implications for developing culturally appropriate definitions of child abuse and neglect. Korbin (1980) has stressed the importance of considering both *emic* perspectives (i.e., viewpoints of members within the cultural group) and *etic* perspectives (i.e., outside viewpoints) when defining acts as abusive or neglectful. From an *emic* perspective, our findings highlight the importance of considering not only what is normal or acceptable within a culture, but also how members of a culture subjectively perceive the experience.

The finding that women were more likely than men to report having been sexually abused is consistent with incidence statistics that have estimated sexual abuse to be approximately four times more common among women than men (e.g., National Center on Child Abuse and Neglect, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1988). Explanations for the higher rate of sexual abuse among women than men include psychiatric, feminist, evolution-

ary, and sexual aggression hypotheses (for a review, see Anderson & Cooper, 1997; Buss & Malamuth, 1996). Across ethnicity, men were significantly more likely than their female counterparts to report having been both physically abused and neglected and to have experienced more severe forms of abuse. Despite this, there were no significant gender differences in subjective perceptions of physical abuse. This suggests that women may have a lower threshold than men for labeling physical discipline as abusive.

Several factors warrant consideration in interpreting the present results. First, with regard to the measures used in this study, the coefficient alphas for the neglect composite were relatively low (i.e., .44 to .65). Although this was the case across ethnic groups, it suggests that these particular items may not form a reliable composite indicator of neglect. The items referred primarily to insufficient food or clothing, lack of cleanliness, and being left home alone; lack of supervision, a commonly used indicator of neglect, was not well represented.² Second, with regard to sexual abuse, we did not assess who the perpetrator was. Thus, ratings may have included sexual advances that occurred during early dating experiences or sexual exploration among children.³ Third, the questionnaires used in this study represent an imposed *etic* measurement of abuse. That is, we measured abuse among both Asians and non-Asians using questionnaires that defined abuse according to North American standards. Although the general pattern of associations between objective acts and subjective perceptions of abuse was similar across ethnic groups—and, hence, provides some support for the validity of these measures with Asian individuals—the cultural transferability of such measures remains an important issue for future research.

A further limitation of this study is the somewhat heterogeneous nature of the ethnic Asian category. Although the majority of Asians were ethnic Chinese, a small percentage represented diverse Asian cultures. In an extensive study of Asian American child-rearing practices, Lui (1991) reported overall significant differences between Whites and a variety of Asian cultures (Japanese, Chinese, and Korean) such that Asians were more controlling and less nurturing than Whites. There were also, however, significant group differences among Asians. Japanese parenting was more similar to that of Whites than were Chinese and Korean parenting styles. Lui's (1991) study highlighted the importance of considering group differences when examining cultural influences on behavior. The small sample sizes of non-Chinese Asians in our study precluded separate analyses between Asian groups. Future research is needed to examine whether the incidence and expression of sexual abuse differs between immigrant Asian cultures.

The fact that our sample was composed of an undergraduate student population warrants consideration when interpreting our findings. This sample worked to an advantage in that it allowed for examination of abuse histories within a relatively homogeneous group with respect to age, socioeconomic status, and intelligence. However, to the extent that this sample may have included a relatively high proportion of psychologically healthy persons compared with the general population, the results of the present study may be limited in their generalizability. Finally, it is important to stress that, although abuse measures differed significantly between

² We are grateful to an anonymous reviewer for this comment.

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persons of Asian and European ancestry, the differences were relatively small in magnitude, especially with regard to sexual abuse and neglect. Moreover, both Asians and non-Asians reported relatively low levels of abuse and showed a range of reported abuse experiences. With regard to the clinical utility of these results, the main function served by this study is to alert clinicians to carefully inquire about early life experiences with what are here referred to as physical, sexual, and emotional abuse and neglect. The present study represents only a preliminary examination of ethnic differences in the incidence and expression of abuse. Prospective studies with long-term follow-up are needed to further elucidate cultural factors in immigrant Asian early abuse histories.

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