

Sexual Aggression Among Asian Americans: Risk and Protective Factors

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Rates of sexual aggression among Asian Americans are relatively low. It is possible that these low rates are because Asian Americans are less likely than other groups to develop developmental, motivational, and situational risk factors associated with sexual aggression. Moreover, an emphasis in Asian cultures on self-control of sexual and aggressive behavior may serve as a protective factor. Nevertheless, patriarchal aspects of Asian cultures may place some Asian Americans at risk for sexual victimization or perpetration of sexually aggressive behavior. Although Asian Americans may be at less risk for sexual aggression than other groups, interventions that counteract the patriarchal aspects of Asian cultures may further reduce risk.

• sexual aggression • Asian Americans • psychosexual behavior • rape • sociocultural factors • at-risk populations

Existing research suggests that sexual aggression is a serious societal problem that affects as many as 1 in 4 Americans in terms of perpetration or victimization (Koss, Gidycz, & Wisniewski, 1987). Most of the available information on sexual aggression is applicable to European American populations. However, there is some evidence of differential rates of sexual aggression in ethnic minority populations. Lower rates of sex-

ual aggression in ethnic minority groups may suggest that there are protective factors against sexual aggression within these groups that may not exist in European American groups.

Sexually aggressive behavior is relatively infrequent among Asian Americans. This is a consistent finding in both official data and in anonymous self-report data among perpetrators and victims (Federal Bureau of Inves-

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tigation [FBI], 1994; Koss et al., 1987). Yet the reasons for this low frequency of sexual aggression are poorly understood. Most sexual aggression involves male perpetrators and female victims, which are the focus of this article.

General Risk Factors for Sexual Aggression

Perpetrator Risk Factors

Past sexually aggressive behavior is the best single predictor of future sexually aggressive behavior (Hall, 1990; Quinsey, Rice, & Harris, 1995; Rice, Quinsey, & Harris, 1991). For men who are not sexually aggressive, the appraised threats of sexual aggression, including legal or societal sanctions against it, constitute a threshold that prevents them from engaging in sexually aggressive behavior (Hall, 1996; Hall & Hirschman, 1993). However, men who are sexually aggressive violate this threshold because the appraised threats of sexual aggression do not outweigh its appraised benefits, such as power and sexual gratification. Men who have violated this threshold are at greater risk to become sexually aggressive again than men who have not violated the threshold, because this threshold is weakened.

Why do some men violate the threshold against sexually aggressive behavior? Sexually aggressive males may experience different developmental patterns than males who are not sexually aggressive. Some developmental risk factors include poverty, parental neglect, physical or sexual abuse, a family criminal history, academic difficulties, and interpersonal difficulties (Hall, 1996; Hall & Hirschman, 1991). These factors create a general risk for antisocial behavior. The developmental variables most specifically associated with sexually aggressive behavior involve heterosexual relationships. Sexually aggressive males tend to initiate coitus earlier than men who are not sexually aggressive (Malamuth, Linz, Heavey, Barnes, & Acker, 1995; Malamuth, Sockloskie, Koss, & Tanaka, 1991). Initiation of coitus before a

person is developmentally capable of establishing the emotional relationships that provide a context for sex may increase a male's risk of perpetrating sexual aggression because he comes to view females as sex objects rather than as people (Hall, 1996).

Sexually aggressive males also tend to have more sexual partners than males who are not sexually aggressive (Malamuth et al., 1995, 1991). Promiscuous men often have an impersonal approach to sex in which the partner may be devalued and objectified (Malamuth et al., 1995). When the primary or sole purpose of sex is personal gratification, the needs of the partner are less relevant, and the likelihood of using coercion to meet personal needs may increase. Objectification of females may lead to short-lived sexual relationships and a failure to establish nonsexual friendships with peer females (Hall, 1996; Hall & Barongan, 1997).

What causes men who have been sexually aggressive once to persist in sexually aggressive behavior? Forced sexual intercourse is often accompanied by the perpetrator's physiological sexual arousal, which may be highly reinforcing. The more times this type of conditioning occurs, the greater the likelihood that a male will be sexually aroused by sexually aggressive behavior (Marshall & Barbaree, 1984). Another effect of perpetrating sexual aggression on multiple occasions is a desensitization to the negative effects of sexual aggression. For some men coercive behaviors may come to be viewed as necessary and excusable components of having sex with someone who refuses (Hall, 1996). Other males who have multiple short-lived sexual relationships with females may become angry toward women because these relationships tend to be neither lasting nor satisfying (Gold & Clegg, 1990). Sexual aggression is the behavior that becomes an expression of this anger (Malamuth et al., 1995, 1991).

Sexually aggressive men become sexually aggressive under certain circumstances but not under others (Hall, 1996). For example, 21% of a group of nonaggressive undergraduate men reported some likelihood that

they would force a woman into sexual acts, and another 14% also reported some likelihood that they would rape if they could be assured of not being caught (Malamuth, 1988). Extreme reductions in sanctions against rape occasionally occur, such as in times of war, and some nonaggressive men do become sexually aggressive. However, sanctions against rape are generally weak relative to sanctions against other crimes (Allison & Wrightsman, 1993; Koss, 1993). Thus, the relatively low likelihood of punishment for sexually aggressive behavior may disinhibit sexual aggression among some men. Another implication of Malamuth's (1988) data is that sanctions against sexual aggression deter most men from engaging in it.

Peers may have a greater influence over sexual behavior than other influences (e.g., parents, schools; Rodgers & Rowe, 1993). The availability of opposite-gender peers who are willing to engage in sexual behavior creates the opportunity for sexual aggression to occur (Himelein, 1995; Malamuth et al., 1995, 1991), and the presence of sexually active same-gender peers, who may model the message that sexual activity is acceptable, is associated both with sexual activity and risk for sexual aggression (Vicary, Klingaman, & Harkness, 1995). Moreover, the presence of male peers who approve of sexually coercive behavior may increase a male's risk of engaging in sexually aggressive behavior (DeKeseredy & Kelly, 1995).

Sexually aggressive men often report that they used alcohol while they were sexually aggressive (Muehlenhard & Linton, 1987; Seto & Barbaree, 1995). However, alcohol may be used as an excuse for being sexually aggressive, and it is unlikely that alcohol use has a causal role in sexually aggressive behavior. More likely, alcohol use may disinhibit sexually aggressive impulses among some men (Seto & Barbaree, 1995).

In summary, a male's history of sexually aggressive behavior is associated with his likelihood of engaging in sexually aggressive behavior in the future. *Developmental* sexual factors, including early initiation of coitus

and promiscuous sexual activity, may facilitate physiological, cognitive, and affective *motivational* factors for perpetrating sexually aggressive behavior. The likelihood that these motivational factors will influence a male to engage in sexually aggressive behavior may be mediated by *situational* factors. Among males who are motivated to become sexually aggressive, the likelihood of engaging in sexual aggression may be a function of perceived sanctions against sexually aggressive behavior, peer support for such behavior (i.e., availability of peer sexual partners, peer approval of sexual aggression), and alcohol use.

Victim Risk Factors

Victims of sexual aggression are not responsible for being sexually victimized. Most victims do not knowingly place themselves in situations in which they are likely to be sexually abused. However, potential victims' amount of contact with perpetrators comprises a risk factor for sexual victimization.

In a national sample of 32 colleges, Koss and Dinero (1989) found that the strongest predictors of sexual victimization among women were past sexual abuse, sexual activity, alcohol use, and sexual attitudes. Sexual activity, alcohol use, sexual attitudes and, to some degree, past sexual abuse may appear to be under a women's control and thus women may also appear to be responsible for these behaviors. However, many women who engage in behaviors associated with risk for being sexually victimized, such as having multiple sexual partners or drinking alcohol before engaging in sexual behavior, are not seeking to be sexually victimized. Moreover, such behaviors are risky only when they occur in the presence of a perpetrator. A woman who has multiple partners who are not perpetrators or who drinks on a date with a man who is not a perpetrator is not at increased risk for sexual victimization. Even when women engage in behaviors that may be associated with risk for sexual victimization, it is the perpetrator's decision to become sexually aggressive (Hall, 1996). Thus,

women who happen to have sex with a perpetrator are not responsible for being sexually victimized.

A history of being sexually abused is associated with additional sexual victimization among females (Messman & Long, 1996). In a community sample, 21% of women who were not abused during childhood experienced sexual victimization involving physical contact during adulthood, whereas 56% of women who were sexually victimized during childhood experienced sexual victimization involving physical contact during adulthood (Wyatt, Guthrie, & Notgrass, 1992). Sexual victimization during childhood or adolescence is a risk factor for future sexual abuse insofar as the victim has come into contact with a pool of perpetrators, or at least one perpetrator from this pool, and is at risk for future sexual victimization any time she comes into contact with someone from this perpetrator pool. For example, a sexually abused female's network of friends may include friends of the perpetrator, some of whom may also be perpetrators. Indeed, victims often report that they become involved with men who resemble the men who victimized them (Tsai & Wagner, 1978). To the extent that a female maintains contact with the perpetrator and this network of friends that includes other perpetrators, she is at continued risk for being sexually victimized.

The increased risk of sexual revictimization for victims of sexual abuse may exist in part because some women who have been previously sexually abused may begin to engage in indiscriminate sexual behavior in an effort to seek intimacy (Briere & Runtz, 1993; Koss & Dinero, 1989; Wyatt et al., 1992). Sexual abuse of female children also may result in these victims' sexualized behaviors, including having an earlier first coitus, multiple sex partners, and brief sexual relationships that may place them at risk for additional sexual abuse (Kendall-Tackett, Williams, & Finkelhor, 1993). Females who engage in indiscriminate sexual behavior may be perceived by perpetrators as more likely to engage in sex and may be targeted

as potential victims more so than females who have more limited sexual contact (Himelein, 1995).

Data are conflicting on personality factors associated with risk for being sexually victimized once versus multiple times. Although there is evidence that single- and multiple-incident victims do not differ on personality characteristics (Sorenson, Siegel, Golding, & Stein, 1991; Wyatt et al., 1992), other evidence suggests that they do (Gidycz, Coble, Latham, & Layman, 1993). In a 9-month prospective study with a large sample of college women, a direct relationship was found between personality factors and additional sexual victimization among women who had been previously sexually victimized (Gidycz et al., 1993). Women who experienced greater levels of depression and anxiety after sexual victimization were more likely to be sexually revictimized than were sexually victimized women who experienced less depression and anxiety (Gidycz et al., 1993). However, this association between victim personality factors and additional victimization was only partially supported in a follow-up study (Gidycz, Hanson, & Layman, 1995).

Victim personality factors per se are not a causal factor in sexual aggression. For example, a woman who is sexually victimized could experience severe levels of psychopathology that would limit interpersonal and sexual contact with men, which would thereby place her at *lower* risk for revictimization. Being sexually victimized is contingent on contact with a perpetrator, independent of whether a person experiences psychopathology. A woman with psychopathology who has contact with a perpetrator may be at increased risk for victimization as a function of the perpetrator's perceptions of her as more vulnerable or as less likely to report being sexually abused (Craig, 1990).

A second risk factor in Koss and Dinero's (1989) study for being sexually victimized was amount of sexual activity. Analogous to the data on risk for perpetrating sexual aggression, women's risk for sexual victimization has been associated with sexual activity

variables, including age at first coitus and number of sexual partners (Himelein, 1995; Vicary et al., 1995; Wyatt, Newcomb, & Riederle, 1993). Sexual activity is a situational variable that may increase contact with perpetrators. The greater the number of sexual partners, the greater the likelihood that a woman will come into contact with a perpetrator (Buss & Schmitt, 1993).

Although Koss and Dinero (1989) reported that sexual attitudes differentiated victims and nonvictims, three of the four items that composed Koss and Dinero's sexual attitudes variable involved questions about whether women had engaged in kissing, petting, and sexual intercourse. Thus, this variable appears to be more of a sexual behavior variable than an attitudinal one. Most rape victims and nonvictims do not differ on personality characteristics, including gender role attitudes and rape-supportive beliefs (Koss & Dinero, 1989; Sorenson et al., 1991). These findings support the notion that victims are not responsible for being raped, in that individual characteristics are not associated with rape risk. Rather than being associated with any particular victim characteristics, risk for being sexually victimized is associated with the likelihood of coming into personal contact with a perpetrator.

Alcohol use by females has been consistently associated with sexual victimization (Abbey, Ross, McDuffie, & McAuslan, 1996; Koss & Dinero, 1989; Muehlenhard & Linton, 1987). It is possible that some victims may blame their victimization on their drinking behavior in a manner similar to the way perpetrators blame alcohol for their sexually aggressive behavior. However, the primary risk of female alcohol use may be that it is perceived by perpetrators as an excuse for becoming sexually aggressive (Hall & Hirschman, 1991; Koss & Dinero, 1989). There is nothing inherently risky about a woman drinking on a date unless a male perceives her drinking as entitling him to have sex regardless of her wishes.

In summary, developmental factors that increase the likelihood of contact with peer

or nonpeer perpetrators, including amount of sexual activity (e.g., early initiation of coitus, multiple sex partners) and sexual victimization, increase risk for sexual victimization during adulthood. The likelihood of adult sexual victimization is mediated by situational variables, including number of sexual partners and alcohol use, that may activate a perpetrator's cognitive distortions about the justifiability of becoming sexually aggressive. There do not appear to be specific personality characteristics of attitudes associated with women's risk for sexual victimization.

Risk and Protective Factors Among Asian Americans

Risk Factors

Women often have a subordinate status in Asian cultures (Ho, 1990). Some Asian American women may view themselves as responsible for being sexually victimized (Chen & True, 1994; Hamilton, 1989; Yoshihama, Parekh, & Boyington, 1991), and women who believe that women are to blame for rape may be at risk for being sexually victimized themselves (Muehlenhard & MacNaughton, 1988). Asian American women may be viewed by perpetrators as particularly vulnerable for these reasons. Moreover, stereotypes of Asian American women held by Asians and non-Asians are that they are exotic, sexual creatures. Some Asian American women may not want to report abuse to authorities because they blame themselves for what happened, feel that they will bring disgrace to their families, or fear that they or the perpetrator will face discriminatory or even brutal treatment by social service agencies when the perpetrator is Asian American (Chen & True, 1994; Hamilton, 1989; Yoshihama et al., 1991). Moreover, the Asian American community may also ostracize the woman if she reports being sexually victimized. Asian American women are less likely to report dating violence to police than are Latina and African Ameri-

can women, although Asian American women are not less likely to report dating violence to police than are European American women (Miller & Simpson, 1991).

Insofar as the percentage of non-Asian men who are sexually aggressive is greater than the percentage of Asian American men who are sexually aggressive (FBI, 1994; Koss et al., 1987), Asian American women who date non-Asian men may be at increased risk for being sexually victimized. Asian American women who date non-Asians may be more sexually active than Asian American women who exclusively date Asian American men (Huang & Uba, 1992). Opportunities for sexual behavior also create opportunities for sexually aggressive behavior. Some non-Asian men may deliberately choose to sexually victimize Asian American women because of their perceived vulnerability and relatively low likelihood of reporting sexual aggression. Immigrant women and those who have limited English language skills may be particularly vulnerable.

A collectivist orientation may increase the risk of aggression against members of out-groups. Although in-group aggression is limited in collectivist Japan, out-group aggression has been extensive in Japan's history, particularly during wartime (e.g., physical and sexual abuse of Korean women by Japanese soldiers during World War II; Lai, 1986). Out-group aggression typically has no direct bearing on in-group harmony and thus is not necessarily disapproved of. Although Asian behaviors may be exhibited differently among Asian Americans than among Asians in Asia, it is possible that this in-group-out-group distinction may also occur in America. If Asian American women are perceived by Asian American men as part of the out-group (e.g., non-male), then a collectivist orientation may not deter aggression, including sexual aggression (cf. Triandis, 1995). Moreover, non-Asian women may be perceived by some Asian American men as an out-group and legitimate targets for sexual and other forms of aggression (Chan, 1987; Chen & True, 1994). However, because surveys typically

have not assessed the ethnicity of perpetrator and victim (e.g., Cochran, Mays, & Leung, 1991; Koss et al., 1987), the prevalence of interracial sexual aggression among Asian Americans is unknown.

In summary, the patriarchal aspects of Asian cultures may create a risk for sexual aggression. Because they are often subordinated, some Asian American women may submit to sexually aggressive behavior and may be unwilling to report it to authorities. The perceived vulnerability of Asian American women may be attractive to perpetrators. Asian American men may be at risk to be sexually aggressive against those who appear to be members of out-groups. Nevertheless, very few Asian American men perpetrate sexual aggression, and very few Asian American women are sexually victimized. The reasons for this infrequency of sexual aggression among Asian Americans are unknown.

Protective Factors

Unlike the emphasis on individualism in mainstream American culture, American cultures having non-Western origins often emphasize collective values (American Psychological Association Commission on Violence and Youth, 1993; Hill, Soriano, Chen, & LaFromboise, 1994; D. Sue & Sue, 1990). Whereas there tends to be a consensus about cultural norms and sanctions against violating these norms in collectivist cultures, there are often multiple, sometimes conflicting, cultural norms for which violation is often not punished in individualist cultures (Triandis, 1995). Interpersonal conflict and violence tend to be minimal in cultures with collectivist orientations, because individual goals are subordinated to those of the group, social support is high, and competitiveness is low (Triandis, 1995; Triandis, Bontempo, Villareal, Asai, & Lucca, 1988). Crime levels and collectivist influences are inversely associated (Triandis, 1995). In the United States, arrest rates for violent crimes perpetrated by Asian Americans are about one third the rate of the numbers of Asian

Americans in the population (American Psychological Association Commission on Violence and Youth, 1993).

The largest and most representative national survey of sexually aggressive behavior, in which participants' identities were anonymous, suggests differences in prevalence rates of sexual aggression across ethnic groups during adulthood (Koss et al., 1987). Prevalence rates of rape in Koss et al.'s (1987) study were significantly lower for Asian American women (7%) than for women in other groups (European American = 16%, Asian American = 10%, Latina = 12%, Native American = 40%). These findings are consistent with other multi-ethnic studies of self-reported rates of rape among college women (Mills & Granoff, 1992: European American = 29%, Japanese American = 17%; Urquiza & Goodlin-Jones, 1994: European American = 26%, Asian American = 38%, Latina = 18%, Asian American = 11%). Moreover, few Asian American men perpetrate rape relative to most other groups (Mills & Granoff, 1992: European American = 10%, Japanese American = 0%; Koss et al., 1987: European American = 4%, African American = 10%, Asian American = 2%, Latino = 7%, Native American = 0%).

It is possible that Asian Americans have narrower definitions of rape and other sexually aggressive behaviors than do other non-Asian groups (Mills & Granoff, 1992; Mori, Bernat, Glenn, Selle, & Zarate, 1995). For example, a narrow definition would define rape as occurring only when physical force is involved. Such a definition would exclude rapes in which threats (e.g., with a weapon) or psychological coercion are involved. Koss et al.'s (1987) study avoided such definitional problems to some extent with the use of specific descriptions of sexually aggressive behaviors instead of terms such as *rape* or *sexual aggression*.

It is possible that the lower reporting of sexually aggressive behavior among Asian Americans is a function of social desirability (U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 1992; Urquiza & Goodlin-Jones, 1994). Russell (1984) suggested that Asian women may be

less likely than non-Asian women to disclose intimate information. Nevertheless, among Asian Americans who were sexually active, there were no significant differences in sexual behaviors between those who were U.S. born and foreign born (Cochran et al., 1991). Moreover, there were also few differences between Asian Americans who were sexually active and members of other ethnic groups who were sexually active (Cochran et al., 1991). It is possible that social desirability is less influential for the responses of sexually active people than it is for those who are not sexually active. However, it is unclear why there would be a between-group ethnic difference in the influence of social desirability on the responses of sexually inactive people and no similar between-group ethnic difference for those who are sexually active.

Conditions of anonymity may make data less subject to bias than official reports, such as police records, which require formal contact with the legal system. Anonymity does not prevent socially desirable responding, but social desirability can be measured and controlled for (Briere, 1992). In a study on rape attitudes in which participants' identities were anonymous, associations among variables were the same regardless of whether social desirability was controlled for (Lonsway & Fitzgerald, 1995). Thus, the effects of social desirability may be somewhat minimal when participants' identities are anonymous.

Perhaps there are specific aspects of Asian American culture that serve as protective factors against sexually aggressive behavior (Hall, 1996; Hall & Barongan, 1997; Urquiza & Goodlin-Jones, 1994). The high value placed on self-control among Asian Americans (Uba, 1994) may prevent the development of the impulse dyscontrol associated with sexually aggressive behavior (Baumeister, Smart, & Boden, 1996). In Asian cultures, in which the self is not separate from others, any behavior that upsets group interdependence is not approved of (Markus & Kitayama, 1994). Deviant behavior may result in loss of face or the threat or loss of one's social integrity (S. Sue & Mor-

ishima, 1982). Loss of face may be a more important mediator of behavior among Asian Americans than among European Americans.

In collectivist cultures, the most important relationships are vertical (e.g., parent-child; Triandis et al., 1988). Thus, parents may have more influence over their children's behavior than peers have. Age at first coitus is delayed among adolescents who perceive their parents as more influential than peers (Jessor, Costa, Jessor, & Donovan, 1983; Newcomb & Bentler, 1988; Wyatt, 1989). Delaying coitus may limit opportunities to become a perpetrator or victim of sexual aggression.

Other-focused emotions, including empathy, tend to be more common in collectivist cultures than in individualistic cultures, in which ego-focused emotions, including anger, may be more common (Triandis, 1995). The cognitions of collectivists tend to be directed toward the needs of the in-group, whereas cognitions among individualists tend to be directed toward personal needs (Triandis, 1995). Thus, sexual aggression by Asian Americans against other Asian Americans would be deterred by empathy, which may reduce the likelihood of the development of cognitive distortions about victims (Hall, 1996).

In a multi-ethnic sample of college students, 47% of Asian Americans were sexually active versus 72% of European Americans, 84% of African Americans, and 59% of Latinos (Cochran et al., 1991). These percentages are consistent with the percentages of sexually active college students by ethnic group in other samples (e.g., Huang & Uba, 1992; Jessor et al., 1983). In some traditional Asian families, dating for females may be unacceptable until a certain age or until their education is completed (Yoshihama et al., 1991). Thus, some Asian American women may have limited contact with men, particularly in situations in which sexual aggression is likely to occur (e.g., dating, sexual situations). Huang and Uba (1992) speculated that Chinese Americans may delay sexual intercourse because they want to wait

until they are certain that there is adequate emotional commitment, which also was found to be the primary reason for maintaining virginity among European Americans (Sprecher & Regan, 1996).

The collectivist aspects of Asian cultures may also contribute to lower rates of sexual activities among Asian Americans. Romantic relationships for Asian Americans may occur within the context of interconnectedness of larger social networks (Dion & Dion, 1993). Thus, relational aspects of romance may be emphasized over sexual aspects. Indeed, Asians tend to be more friendship oriented in their romantic relationships than do people of European ancestry (Dion & Dion, 1993).

Unlike non-Asian American groups, in which males tend to be more sexually experienced than females (Rodgers & Rowe, 1993), there is evidence to suggest that Asian American men have less sexual experience than Asian American women (Huang & Uba, 1992). The absence of opportunities for having sex may deter Asian American men from being sexually active more than it deters Asian American women (Huang & Uba, 1992). Stereotypes of Asian men among others and among themselves are generally negative (Huang & Uba, 1992). Many Asian Americans may perceive themselves as unassertive and socially unskilled (Zane, Sue, Hu, & Kwon, 1991). Self-perceptions of shyness have also been found to be associated with virginity among European American males (Sprecher & Regan, 1996). Peer norms may also influence Asian Americans' behavior. The majority of Asian American college students are virgins (Cochran et al., 1991; Huang & Uba, 1992). This may create less peer pressure toward compulsory heterosexual behavior among Asian Americans (Hall, 1996).

Having non-Asian sexual partners also affects Asian Americans' sexual behavior. Whereas approximately one third of Chinese Americans who dated only Asians and Asian Americans had experienced coitus, nearly two thirds of those who dated European Americans had done so (Huang &

Uba, 1992). The greater sexual activity of Asian American females relative to Asian American males may be a function of Asian American females' greater sexual access to non-Asians. Greater contact among Asian American women with non-Asian men who may be more sexually aggressive than Asian American men may place these women at greater risk for becoming sexually victimized.

Alcohol use in dating situations is associated with risk for becoming a perpetrator or victim of sexual aggression. There is consistent evidence of lower rates of alcohol and drug use among Asian American men and women (Akutsu, Sue, Zane, & Nakamura, 1989; Gillmore et al., 1991; S. Sue & Nakamura, 1984; S. Sue, Zane, & Ito, 1979), which may reduce risk for sexual aggression in dating situations.

Other ethnic minority groups in the United States also have collectivist orientations, yet official data suggest lower rates of sexual aggression among Asian Americans than among other groups (FBI, 1994). However, FBI data do not account for the socioeconomic status of those arrested. Poverty is a stronger predictor of violent behavior, including sexual aggression, than race or ethnicity (Hill et al., 1994). The higher rates of sexual aggression among some groups may be a function of a disproportionately high rate of poverty. Among Asian Americans having lower socioeconomic status, disproportionately high rates of child abuse and neglect and spousal abuse have been reported (Ima & Hohm, 1991; Uba, 1994).

In summary, Asian Americans may have less involvement as perpetrators and victims of sexual aggression because of cultural influences. A cultural emphasis on impulse control may limit Asian Americans' sexual behavior. Limited sexual behavior decreases opportunities for sexual aggression to occur during development or adulthood. This emphasis on impulse control may make Asian American males unlikely to develop physiological, cognitive, and affective motivations to become sexually aggressive. Asian American peer support for promiscuous sexual be-

havior and for sexual aggression may be very limited. Alcohol use, which is a risk factor for sexual aggression, is relatively limited among Asian Americans.

Preventive Interventions

Interventions With Women

Most interventions for victims of sexual aggression have focused on the traumatic effects of victimization. For example, the diagnosis and treatment of posttraumatic stress in sexual assault victims has been extensively examined (e.g., Foa, Rothbaum, & Steketee, 1993). However, ameliorating the effects of sexual victimization does not necessarily reduce the likelihood of being revictimized.

One effective method of preventing additional sexual aggression is the incarceration of men who have previously been sexually aggressive and are at the highest risk to become sexually aggressive again. Incarceration of sexually aggressive men is contingent on these men being reported to authorities. Unfortunately, Asian American women may be less likely to report incidents of sexual aggression to authorities than are non-Asians because of a tendency not to identify sexually aggressive acts as such (Mills & Granoff, 1992). Moreover, more than European Americans, Asian Americans tend to view victims as being more responsible for the sexual aggression and generally tend to hold negative attitudes toward victims (Mori et al., 1995). Thus, preventive interventions with Asian American women should emphasize that any violation of consent constitutes sexual aggression and that perpetrators are solely responsible for engaging in sexually aggressive acts.

Non-Asian men tend to be more sexually active and more sexually aggressive than Asian American men (Cochran et al., 1991; Huang & Uba, 1992; Koss et al., 1987; Mills & Granoff, 1992). Asian American women may benefit from knowing that non-Asian men may have differing expectations of sexual behavior in a relationship than they may

have. Moreover, an awareness of stereotypes of Asian women as both sexual and submissive may help Asian American women to avoid or confront Asian and non-Asian men who believe these stereotypes.

There is empirical evidence that women can reduce their risk of being sexually victimized by becoming aware of risk factors and by changing their behavior. Hanson and Gidycz (1993) designed a program for college women to (a) increase awareness of sexual assault, (b) dispel common myths about rape, (c) educate participants about social forces that foster a rape-supportive environment, (d) teach practical strategies for preventing rape, (e) change dating behaviors associated with acquaintance rape (e.g., alcohol consumption while on a date), and (f) foster effective sexual communication. Only 6% of college women who participated in an acquaintance-rape prevention program were sexually victimized over a 9-week period following the program, whereas 14% of college women who did not participate in the program were sexually victimized (Hanson & Gidycz, 1993). However, sexual victimization rates among college women who had previously been sexually victimized did not significantly differ between women who did and did not participate in the program, with revictimization rates ranging from 10% to 44%.

It is unclear why Hanson and Gidycz's (1993) program did not reduce the sexual victimization rates of women who had been previously sexually victimized. It is possible that these women did not have the resources to make changes in their behaviors and lifestyles that would prevent further victimization. It also is possible that perpetrators may perceive women who have been previously sexually victimized as more vulnerable than nonvictimized women.

Primary prevention with women who have not been sexually victimized may be more effective than tertiary prevention involving sexually victimized women. Moreover, many sexually victimized women, including Asian Americans, do not receive interventions because of their unwilling-

ness to disclose their victimization to authorities or to mental health professionals (Koss, 1993). Thus, prevention programs that broadly target women may reach victims who would not otherwise receive interventions.

Interventions With Men

Perpetrators are responsible for sexually aggressive behavior, and effective prevention methods targeted at perpetrators or potential perpetrators would reduce the necessity of victim intervention programs (Hall, 1996; Hanson & Gidycz, 1993). Asian American men appear to be at lower risk than other groups for perpetrating sexual aggression (Koss et al., 1987; Mills & Granoff, 1992). However, Asian American men who perceive women as an out-group or who perceive women's role as being subservient to men may be at risk to become sexually aggressive. Thus, modifying cognitive distortions about women may be important in prevention programs for Asian American men.

There exists empirical evidence that men's attitudes concerning sexual aggression can be modified by means of primary and secondary prevention. Programs to enhance victim empathy that involve participation have been demonstrated to reduce cognitive distortions about sexual aggression (Gilbert, Heesacker, & Gannon, 1991; Schewe & O'Donohue, 1993). In one study, men who participated in a prevention program reported that they were less likely to commit rape than were men who did not participate in the program (Schewe & O'Donohue, 1993). However, the effectiveness of primary prevention programs in reducing actual sexually aggressive behavior is unknown.

Conclusion

Rates of perpetration of sexual aggression and sexual victimization are lower among Asian Americans than among other groups.

These lower rates may be associated with a lower prevalence of risk factors among Asian Americans that are associated with perpetration and victimization. Moreover, Asian cultural restraints on sexual and impulsive behavior may serve as protective factors. However, there have not been empirical investigations of the role of culture in the low rates of Asian American sexual aggression. Research is necessary to determine the relative contributions of cultural, developmental, motivational, and situational factors in perpetration and victimization among Asian Americans.

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