

# College Students' Perceptions of Intimate Partner Violence: A Comparative Study of Japan, China, and the United States

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An investigation of cross-cultural differences between the United States, Japan, and China in perceptions of male to female intimate partner violence, and in the extent to which gender and traditional attitudes toward women related to these perceptions. College students ( $n = 943$ ) read two fictitious scenarios describing marital and dating violence. MANOVA results showed gender differences in the perceptions of violence between the three countries. Male participants had more traditional attitudes toward women and placed more blame on female victims. The magnitude of the difference between women's and men's scores was much smaller for Japanese students than for American and Chinese students. Hierarchical multiple regression analyses demonstrated that the effects of respondent gender were reduced when traditional attitudes toward women were taken into account. Differences in beliefs about appropriate gender roles still exist among college students in these countries and may be related to socially tolerant attitudes toward violence against women.

Violence against women and girls continues to be one of the most widespread violations of human rights. It occurs in various forms including physical, sexual, psychological, structural, and economic abuse, and cuts across boundaries of age, race, culture, wealth, and geography. It takes place in the home, on the streets, in schools, at the workplace, in the fields, in refugee camps, during conflicts and crises (see Denmark et al. 2006 for more information on these issues). A report from the World Health Organization (WHO) (Garcia-Moreno et al. 2006) suggested that up to 70 percent of women globally experience physical or sexual violence from men in their lifetime – the majority by husbands, intimate partners, or others they know. The effects of violence

can be devastating to a woman's reproductive health as well as to other aspects of her physical and mental well-being (Heise, Ellberg, and Gottemoeller 1999). These consequences can lead to hospitalization, disability, or death.

When designing and implementing intervention programmes or prevention activities, it is important to understand the context of violence and social construction in which partner violence against women occurs. It is also critical to consider societal perceptions of violence against women (Bui 2005; Kolawole and Uche 2005; Kulkarni, Racine, and Ramos 2012; Walker 1999). Although cross-cultural studies have been undertaken on prevalence, pat-

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terms, causes, and consequences of violence against women, little research has been conducted on the perception of violence against women across varying and diverse cultures (Nayak et al. 2003, Yamawaki, Ostenson, and Brown 2009). The purpose of our study is thus to examine college students' perceptions of violence against women. In particular, we investigate both men's and women's perceptions of intimate partner violence in marital and dating scenarios, and whether these judgments are related to nationality and attitudes toward women's roles.

## 1. Background and Literature

### 1.1. Intimate Partner Violence Against Women in the United States, Japan, and China

In the United States, according to a national intimate partner and sexual violence survey conducted in 2011 with 16,507 adults (Black et al. 2011), more than three in ten women (35.6 percent) have experienced rape, physical violence, and/or stalking by an intimate partner. Victims reported that the violence negatively impacted them in a variety of ways (for example, made them feel fearful or concerned for their safety, resulted in an injury or need for services, or caused loss of days at work or school). Thus, it is clear this is an important problem in the United States.

In Japan, a survey conducted by the Gender Equality Bureau in 2011 with 1,751 Japanese women with current or former intimate partners found that 32.9 percent reported suffering physical assaults, psychological threats, or sexual coercion by a partner. This finding is consistent with the results of two earlier surveys, conducted in 2005 (Gender Equality Bureau 2005) and 2008 (Gender Equality Bureau 2008).

In China, building on earlier surveys conducted in 1990 and 2000, the All-China Women's Federation and the National Bureau of Statistics in 2011 conducted a representative national survey involving 105,573 adults aged 18 and over and 20,405 adolescents aged between 10 and 17. Results indicated that 24.7 percent of Chinese women have encountered domestic abuse, including beating, rape, and confinement during their marriages (China Daily 2011). These results indicate that the United States, Japan, and China have high rates of intimate partner violence that deserve further attention.

### 1.2. Effect of Gender on Victim Blame Attribution and Attitudes Toward Women

#### 1.2.1. Effect of Gender on Victim Blame Attribution

It has been suggested that women are victimized twice in the case of intimate violence; first in the actual incident of violence, and second in the perception that they are blamed for their victimization by the police, emergency services, or the public (Summers and Feldman 1984, Fehler-Cabral, Campbell, and Debra 2011). This perception that women are at fault for their own victimization is called "victim blame attribution". Researchers have examined how observers judge victims of violence. Summers and Feldman (1984) had 120 undergraduate students viewed a videotape depicting a violent interaction between a heterosexual couple whose relationship was described as either married, living together, or acquainted. They found that as the intimacy of the relationship increased, observers made increasingly internal attributions blaming the female victim for the abusive behaviour.

Hillier and Foddy (1993) suggested that men were much more likely than women to blame a female victim of violence. Thus, both men and women appear to be more likely to be sympathetic toward the person of their own gender within a situation of male violence toward a female partner. This suggestion was confirmed in studies in the United States (Bryant and Spencer 2003, Yamawaki, Ostenson, and Brown 2009) and in Japan (Yamawaki, Ostenson, and Brown 2009). Further, there is also evidence in U.S. studies that women are more likely than men to support female victims of intimate partner violence (Frieze 2005), and blame the male perpetrator (Sugarman and Cohn 1986). Although we have no Chinese data regarding gender differences, we would also expect this to be the case in China. Thus, we propose that in all three countries, women will be less likely than men to blame female victims of violence.

#### 1.2.1. Effect of Gender on Attitudes Toward Women

"Some people believe that intimate partner violence occurs because the victim provokes the abuser to violent action, while others believe the abuser has a problem managing anger" (Bragg 2003). Values within the culture may relate to more specific views about responsibility for intimate partner violence. One of the most consistent predictors of

perceptions that support violence against women is gender role attitudes, defined as beliefs about appropriate roles for men and women (McHugh and Frieze 1997).

Hofstede, Hofstede, and Minkov (2010) conducted detailed interviews with IBM employees in seventy-six countries using five dimensions of culture (power, self, gender, predictability, time). A key cultural dimension that emerged from these interviews is *masculinity versus femininity*. This dimension focuses on the degree to which “traditional” gender roles are assigned in a culture; for example, men are considered aggressive and competitive, while women are expected to be gentler and concerned with home and family. They found that the United States, Japan, and China were all masculine societies, where “sense of responsibility”, “decisiveness”, “liveliness”, and “ambitiousness” were considered characteristics more found in men, while “caring” and “gentleness” were seen as being more found in women (Hofstede, Hofstede, and Minkov 2010). Considering the effect of gender on victim blame attribution and attitudes toward women, we propose:

*Hypothesis 1.* In all three countries, women will be less likely than men to blame female victims of violence. Additionally, compared to men, women in all three countries will hold less traditional gender role attitudes (attitudes toward women).

### 1.3. Assessment of Attitudes Toward Women's Roles

The most popular and well-validated measures of attitudes toward gender roles is Spence and Helmreich's Attitudes Toward Women scale (ATW) (McHugh and Frieze 1997). Although developed in the United States in the early 1970s, this scale is still widely used in contemporary studies (e.g., Dasgupta and Rivera 2006; Forbes, Adams-Curtis, and White 2004; Whitley and Ægisdóttir 2000; Wyer 2003) including studies in China (Chia et al. 1994), Slovenia and Croatia (Frieze et al. 2003), and Pakistan (Khalid and Frieze 2004). The scale includes statements about the rights and roles of women and men in five major areas in society: (1) “vocational, educational, and intellectual activities”; (2) “the freedom and independence rights of women compared to men in society”; (3) “the acceptability of various dating and etiquette behaviours for men and women”; (4)

“the acceptability of drinking, swearing, and joke-telling behaviours”; and (5) “attitudes toward marital relationships and obligations” (Loo and Thorpe 1998). The ATW scale is relevant because it focuses on traditional beliefs about gender roles on a wide range of dimensions.

### 1.4. Effects of Country on Traditional Attitudes Toward Women and Victim Blame Attribution

We also considered possible differences between the three countries in relation to traditional attitudes toward the role of women. Hofstede, Hofstede, and Minkov (2010) used the Masculine Index to assess the traditional gender-role dimension. Masculine Index values were calculated based on the country's factor score in a factor analysis of the fourteen work goals (for example, earnings, recognition, cooperation, etc.). The factor scores for the masculine dimension were multiplied by 25 and a constant number of 50 points was added. This process put the scores in a range from close to 0 for the most feminine country to close to 100 for the most masculine one. Among the 76 countries that were scored, Japan scored very high (with a score of 95) and ranked second, China (66) ranked eleventh, and the United States (62) ranked nineteenth. All three countries were above the average score of 50 with clearly distinct gender roles. However, Japan had a much higher score than the United States or China. Also, Yamawaki, Ostenson, and Brown (2009), who conducted a cross cultural study between Japan and the United States investigating the relationship between traditional gender roles and domestic violence found that Japanese students demonstrated greater adherence to traditional gender roles (negative attitudes toward women) and that Japanese students tended to blame victims more than American students. Based on these results, we propose:

*Hypothesis 2.* Students in Japan will have more traditional attitudes toward women than students in China and the United States. Additionally, Japanese students will blame the victim of intimate partner violence more than Chinese and American students.

### 1.5. Relationship Between Attitudes Toward Women and Victim Blame Attribution

As proposed in hypotheses 1 and 2, the main effects of gender and country on victim blame attribution might be

at least partially due to differences in attitudes toward women among men and women across the three different countries. Therefore, we also test the hypothesis that victim blame attribution is explained by attitudes toward women. Operationally, when attitudes toward women are included in hierarchical multiple regression with victim blame attribution as the outcome, we predict that the gender effect and country effect will decrease significantly when the attitudes toward women variable is added in a later step.

*Hypothesis 3.* The effects of gender and country on victim blame attribution will be diminished when attitudes toward women are taken into account.

## 2. Method

### 2.1. Participants and Procedures

A total of 1,034 questionnaires were distributed to undergraduate students in three different countries. The researchers introduced the project to the students, answered questions, and assured students that their par-

ticipation was completely voluntary and nonparticipation would not have any academic impact. Participants completed the questionnaire in approximately fifteen minutes. The classroom setting in Japan and China, and the voluntary group setting in the United States helped to produce 100 percent response rates in all three countries. Seventy-nine respondents who failed to complete all the items or gave identical answers to many items were excluded from analysis, as were twelve respondents aged under 18 or over 30. The final sample comprised 943 participants (278 American, 481 Japanese, and 184 Chinese). Table 1 summarizes the characteristics of the participants in the study.

In the United States, the survey was administered at a large urban university in 2011. Rather than completing the survey in the classroom, participants, who were enrolled in an introductory psychology course, received course credit for voluntarily coming to a specified location and taking the survey in groups no larger than thirty students. The participating university's ethical review board approved the study.

**Table 1: Sample**

		The United States (N = 278)		Japan (N = 481)		China (N = 184)	
		n	%	n	%	n	%
Gender	Male	155	55.8	155	32.2	65	35.3
	Female	123	44.2	326	67.8	119	64.7
Age	18-20	263	94.6	397	82.5	81	44.0
	21-22	13	4.7	78	16.2	102	55.4
	23-30	2	0.7	6	1.2	1	0.5
Years in college	1st	207	74.5	359	74.6	1	0.5
	2nd	52	18.7	27	5.6	183	99.5
	3rd	12	4.3	63	13.1	-	-
	4th	6	2.1	28	5.8	-	-
	5th	1	0.4	4	0.8	-	-
Excluded from analysis							
Suspect responses		9		27		15	
Missing values		11		17		-	
Under 18 or over 30		5		5		2	

The data from Japan came in two parts. Because female students outnumbered male by more than three to one in the first sample, a second sample was sought. Controlling for gender, there were no significant differences between the two samples on any of the scales, so the two datasets were combined for analysis.

The English version of the questionnaire was translated into Japanese and back into English by two collaborators proficient in both Japanese and English. The Japanese version was administered at four different universities in introductory psychology classes. Questionnaires were ethically reviewed and approved by a participating university. The survey was administered in 2011 and 2012.

The Chinese sample was the smallest. The survey was translated and back-translated by two collaborators proficient in both Chinese and English. The survey was conducted in 2011 in agriculture, computer science and humanities classes at a large urban university. Since there were no ethical review boards in China at that time, this type of ethical approval could not be obtained.

## 2.2. Stimulus Materials and Measures

Participants were asked to read two fictitious scenarios focusing on attitudes towards male violence in marriage and dating. The scenario in the marriage condition (developed by Yamawaki, Ostenson, and Brown 2009) described a marital violence situation in which a husband hit his wife (see scenario 1). The sentence “He got irate when her breath smelled strongly of alcohol” was omitted since women drinking at party with friends might be condemned and considered as violating traditional gender roles (see McDonald 1994). For the dating condition, we developed a scenario based on Yamawaki, Ostenson, and Brown (2009). This scenario described a dating violence situation of a man hitting his girlfriend (see scenario 2). The details in this scenario were changed, but the injury level was kept similar.

### Scenario 1

Steve and Marci have been married for about four years and have two young children. Steve works hard to support his family, while Marci stays at home with the children. One day, Marci went out with her friends to a party and

came back home at one o'clock in the morning. While Marci was partying, Steve took care of the children, put them to bed, and finished all the chores. When Marci came home, Steve was already very angry at her. He could not control his anger, so he hit her. Marci then lost her balance and hit her forehead on the edge of the kitchen cabinet. From this impact, Marci received a wound that was deep enough that she required three stitches at the hospital emergency room.

### Scenario 2

Michael and Susan have been dating for about four years. Both are students at the university. One day, Susan went out with her friends and then came over to see Michael. Michael had been working hard on a project for one of his classes. He had wanted her help with this and was very angry at Susan for going out with her friends. He was quite upset with her and slapped her fairly hard. She fell and broke a bone in her hand. This required a visit to the emergency room to reset the hand and to get pain pills.

In the Japanese and Chinese scenarios the names were changed to fit each culture.

*Measure of victim blame attribution* (Yamawaki, Ostenson, and Brown 2009). After reading each of the scenarios, participants were asked to respond to items assessing victim blame attribution. This measure consisted of five items: (a) Marci/Susan had some fault in this incident; (b) Marci/Susan provoked this incident; (c) Marci/Susan has some responsibility for creating this situation; (d) Marci/Susan should be blamed for being hit; (e) Marci/Susan should be punished because she behaved badly. Participants were asked to rate these items on a Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Higher scores on this measure indicate more blame attribution to the female victim of intimate violence. The internal consistency of the victim blame attribution measure was adequate to proceed with the main analyses. Cronbach's alpha for the victim blame attribution scale in the United States, Japan, and China, respectively, was .77, .82, .71 in scenario 1 and .76, .89, .78 in scenario 2. The victim-blame attribution score for each scenario was computed by dividing the sum of item scores by the number of items.

*Measure of attitudes toward women.* The fifteen-item ATW scale was developed by Spence and Helmreich (1978). Participants indicate their level of agreement with statements about the roles of women and men, with responses coded on a scale from 1 to 5 where higher scores represent greater conservatism. Analyses of the internal consistency conducted using Cronbach's alpha indicated that internal consistency improved if the item "It is insulting to women to have the 'obey' clause still in the marriage service" was excluded. Thus, this item was omitted, resulting in alpha values of .83, .72, and .73, for the United States, Japan, and China respectively. Two examples of the fourteen items used in our scale are "Under modern economic conditions, with women being active outside the home, men should share in household tasks such as washing dishes and doing laundry" (reverse coded) and "There are many jobs in which men should be given preference over women in being hired or promoted."

## 2. Results

### 2.1. Preliminary Analysis

Preliminary descriptive statistics were run for all scales in each sample to identify whether there was missing data. The analysis revealed that seventeen cases had missing

values in the Japanese dataset and eleven in the U.S. dataset (see Table 1). Missing data were most common for items belonging to ATW scales. We excluded these cases from analysis.

The assumption of univariate normality was assessed by calculating the distribution skewness and kurtosis of each scale used in the analysis, which yielded measures of skewness that ranged from -.01 to .44 and measures of kurtosis that ranged from -.72 to 1.01. These results suggested that all scales used could be considered approximately normally distributed. Preliminary assumption testing was also conducted to check for multivariate normality, linearity, univariate and multivariate outliers, homogeneity of variance-covariance matrices, and multi-collinearity, and no serious violations were noted.

### 2.2. Country and Gender Effects

Gender and country effects were examined in a 3 (country: United States, Japan, China)  $\times$  2 (gender: male, female) between-subjects MANOVA with three dependent variables: victim blame attribution for scenario 1, victim blame attribution for scenario 2, and attitude toward women (Table 2). These data were relevant for testing hypotheses 1 and 2.

**Table 2: MANOVA results for country and gender scores on Victim-Blame Attribution Scale and Attitudes Toward Women scale**

Variables	The United States M(SD)		Japan M(SD)		China M(SD)		MANOVA			
							Main effects			
							Gender F(1,937)	Country F(2,937)	Interaction F(2,937)	
Scenario 1										
Victim-blame attribution							17.37***	44.23***	5.22**	
Male	2.28	(.69)	2.59	(.73)	2.65	(.65)				
Female	1.96	(.69)	2.58	(.64)	2.39	(.51)				
Scenario 2										
Victim-blame attribution							34.05***	34.89***	3.00 †	
Male	1.96	(.67)	1.64	(.68)	2.17	(.67)				
Female	1.63	(.60)	1.51	(.55)	1.87	(.49)				
Attitudes Toward Women							159.14***	23.04***	24.79***	
Male	2.50	(.53)	2.52	(.41)	2.59	(.36)				
Female	2.00	(.45)	2.41	(.40)	2.03	(.35)				

Note: †p < .10, \*p < .05, \*\*p < .01, \*\*\*p < .001

Items were scored using a five-point Likert scale (1 = "Strongly disagree" to 5 = "Strongly agree")

This analysis found a statically significant multivariate main effect for country ( $F(6, 1870) = 43.24, p < .001$ , partial eta squared = .12), for gender ( $F(3, 935) = 54.90, p < .001$ , partial eta squared = .15), and a statistically significant Country x Gender interaction effect ( $F(6, 1870) = 8.66, p < .001$ , partial eta squared = .03).

*Main effect of gender.* Post hoc comparisons using the Bonferroni  $t$  test revealed that female respondents' scores were significantly lower than male respondents' on all three variables (see Table 2). This result is consistent with Hypothesis 1.

*Main effect of country.* Post hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test showed different patterns of results for the three variables (see Table 2). For the victim blame attribution scale in scenario 1, American respondents scored significantly lower than Japanese and Chinese respondents, who had comparable scores. This result supports hypothesis 2. For the victim blame attribution scale in scenario 2, Chinese and American respondents scored significantly higher than Japanese respondents. Between Chinese and American respondents, Chinese respondents scored higher than American respondents. This result is not consistent with hypothesis 2. For the ATW scale, Japanese respondents scored significantly higher than American and Chinese respondents, who had comparable scores. This result supports hypothesis 2.

*Interaction of gender and country.* Post hoc comparisons using the Bonferroni  $t$  test revealed a gender difference for the United States and China on all three outcome measures, but not for Japan (see Table 2). Men in the United States and China blamed the victim more for her behaviour in both scenarios and had more traditional attitudes toward women.

### 2.3. Model Predictions of Victim Blame Attribution

Two five-stage hierarchical multiple regression analyses were conducted to examine whether attitudes toward women significantly predict victim blame attribution in both scenarios. The country variable was dummy-coded into two dichotomous variables, one called C1 (United States, 1, versus China, 0, and Japan, 0) and the other called C2 (China, 1, versus United States 0 and Japan 0). As such, Japan served as the reference group. Also, the attitudes toward women score was mean-centered (see Aiken and West (1991)). Victim blame attribution served as the outcome variable in all stages of the regression. The country variables were entered at stage one of the regression, the gender variable at stage two, mean-centered attitudes toward women at stage three, all two-way interactions of country and gender, gender and attitudes toward women, and country and attitudes toward women at stage four, and a three-way interaction of country, gender, and attitudes toward women at stage five. Summary statistics for the complete model are presented in Table 3 for scenario 1 and Table 4 for scenario 2.

**Table 3: Hierarchical Multiple Regression Analysis for variables predicting Victim-blame attribution in Scenario 1**

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
C1 (The United States vs. Japan)	-.29***	-.32***	-.26***	-.22 †	-.24 †
C2 (China vs. Japan)	-.07 †	-.07*	-.02	-.03	-.08
Gender (Male =1, Female = 2)		-.15***	-.06	-.04	-.05
Attitudes Towards Women			.24***	.08	.01
C1 x Gender				-.05	-.02
C2 x Gender				.01	.03
C1 x Attitudes Toward Women				.11*	.11
C2 x Attitudes Toward Women				.06	.29
Gender x Attitudes Toward Women				.07	.13
C1 x Gender x Attitudes Toward Women					.01
C2 x Gender x Attitudes Toward Women					-.24
$R^2$	.08***	.10***	.14***	.15	.15
$\Delta R^2$		.02	.05	.01	.00

Notes: † $p < .10$ , \* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$



*Scenario 1.* As shown in Table 3, when the two country contrasts (United States versus Japan, and China versus Japan) were added on the first step, the contrast between the United States and Japan was significant, with the United States having lower victim blame attribution scores. When gender was added on the second step, the two country contrasts were significant, as was gender, with female respondents having lower victim blame attribution scores than male respondents. When attitudes toward women were added on the third step, its beta was significant and explained an additional 5 percent of the variance in victim blame attribution. The United States versus Japan contrast remained significant,

but the China versus Japan contrast and gender were no longer significant once attitudes toward women entered the equation. Adding interactions on later steps did not produce any significant betas or explain more variance.

*Scenario 2.* As shown in Table 4, the hierarchical multiple regression revealed that the best fitting model for predicting victim blame attribution is a linear combination of both country contrasts, gender, and attitudes toward women. Addition of all two-way and three-way interactions did not significantly improve prediction. These results provide a full confirmation for hypothesis 3.

**Table 4: Hierarchical Multiple Regression Analysis for variables predicting Victim-blame attribution in Scenario 2**

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
C1 (The United States vs. Japan)	.17***	.13***	.21***	.28*	.25*
C2 (China vs. Japan)	.24***	.24***	.30***	.30*	.25 †
Gender (Male =1, Female = 2)		-.18***	-.08*	-.06	-.08
Attitudes Towards Women			.28***	-.26 †	.05
C1 x Gender				-.08	-.07
C2 x Gender				.00	.04
C1 x Attitudes Toward Women				.02	.13
C2 x Attitudes Toward Women				.03	.24
Gender x Attitudes Toward Women				.00	.20
C1 x Gender x Attitudes Toward Women					-.11
C2 x Gender x Attitudes Toward Women					-.22
$R^2$	.06***	.09***	.16***	.16	.16
$\Delta R^2$		.03	.07	.00	.00

Notes: † $p < .10$ , \* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$

### 3. Discussion

#### 3.1. Gender and Country Differences in Victim Blame Attribution Scores and Attitudes Toward Women Scores

As predicted, when responses were combined across countries, women reported more liberal gender role attitudes than men. The gender differences in attitudes toward women in the current study were consistent with the findings of previous studies (Nelson 1988; Twenge 1997). Similarly, when responses were combined across countries female respondents blamed the victim of violence less than male respondents in both scenarios. These findings are consistent with the work of Bryant and Spencer (2003) and Yamawaki, Ostenson, and Brown (2009). An explanation can be found in the defensive attribution theory (Shaver

1970), which suggests that women who perceive themselves as similar to a female victim of intimate partner violence attribute less responsibility to the victim. Interpretation of these findings is incomplete without also considering respondents' country. The gender differences reported above were found with Chinese and American respondents, but were non-existent or much smaller for Japanese respondents.

MANOVA using post hoc comparisons with the Tukey HSD showed that Japanese respondents had more traditional attitudes toward women than American and Chinese respondents. However, American respondents did not differ from Chinese respondents in attitudes toward

women. Our results partly support Hofstede, Hofstede, and Minkov's findings (2010), which suggested that Japan had the most traditional gender roles, followed by China and the United States. Our finding is also consistent with Yamawaki, Ostenson, and Brown's (2009) findings regarding the mediating influence of traditional gender roles, ambivalent sexism, victim injury, and frequency of assault on perceptions of marital domestic violence. They found that Japanese respondents had more traditional gender roles and tended to blame, and excuse domestic violence more than did American respondents.

Our results also showed differences in how students from the three countries perceived marital and dating violence. In the marital violence situation (scenario 1), we found that Japanese and Chinese students scored the same on victim blame attribution, and that their scores were higher than those of American students. This result could be explained in terms of how students in the three countries differed in perceiving the role of wife/mother in comparison to the role of a normal woman in scenario 1. As noted earlier, Chinese and American respondents were more liberal in their attitudes toward women than Japanese respondents. However, Chinese respondents tended to blame the victim in the marital scenario to the same extent as Japanese respondents, for which one possible explanation is that Chinese and Japanese respondents might regard the women in the scenario as having broken the moral obligation of a "good wife/mother" (partying with her friends until late at night, leaving her children for the husband to take care of) implied by the strong influence of Confucian norms (Wolf 1972). In other words, there is an inconsistency between Chinese respondents' perceptions of the mother role and their attitudes toward women, which is inexplicable to us.

In the dating violence situation (scenario 2), Chinese students tended to blame the victim the most, followed by American students. Japanese students blamed the victim least. This result does not support our hypothesis. A cross-cultural study examining Japanese and American students' perception of the role of romantic love as a basis for marriage indicated that Japanese students are less likely than American students to consider love as a basis for marriage

(see Ting-Toomey 1991). In another cross-cultural study between China and the United States on beliefs about love, Sprecher and Toro-Morn (2002) found that both Chinese and American students believed that love was important for marriage. However, American students considered love to be more important for entering marriage, while Chinese students considered love to be more important for maintaining marriage. Additionally, to the Chinese, the term "romantic relationship" or "dating relationship" often implies "seriousness" and "long-term commitment" (Gao 2001). Moreover, in Chinese culture, "the feeling of love between romantic partners is normally presented as a sense of responsibility and loyalty to the family" (Tzeng and Gandarillas 1992). Based on these reasons, in a dating relationship, Chinese tended to be more committed and accommodating to the partners than American and Japanese. As such, Chinese respondents in our sample might perceive the four-year dating relationship of the couple in our scenario as more serious (as though they were engaged) than American and Japanese respondents would. This contributes to explaining why Chinese respondents blame the female victim in the dating scenario more than American and Japanese respondents.

We did not expect an interaction between gender and country. However, it emerged that American and Chinese female respondents tended to have more egalitarian views toward women and place less blame on the victim of violence in both scenarios, compared to male respondents. However, we found no difference for Japanese male and female respondents in all three outcome measures. Since both male and female Japanese respondents tended to support traditional gender roles, it might be important for Japanese to behave according to their gender role expectations. This explains why both Japanese male and female respondents scored high on victim blame attributions in scenario 1 because the married woman there had deviated from the role expectations of a wife (child-rearing, housework). Conversely, both Japanese male and female students blamed the girlfriend least in scenario 2 because the girlfriend's role expectations were not viewed as seriously as those of a wife/mother. Perhaps, further research might discover whether violation of women's roles might have effects on victim blame attribution.

### 3.2. Relationship Between Attitudes Toward Women and Victim Blame Attribution

Hierarchical multiple regression analyses suggested that neither two-way nor three-way interactions were significant and that attitudes toward women is an important predictor of victim blame attribution across the three countries in both scenarios. Our results are generally consistent with Yamawaki and Tschanz (2005), and Yamawaki, Ostenson, and Brown (2009), which found that traditional gender roles mediated the difference in victim blame between Japanese and American undergraduate students. Interestingly, although there were differences in attitudes toward women due to country (American versus Japan, China versus Japan) and gender (male versus female), two-way (country  $\times$  gender, country  $\times$  ATW, gender  $\times$  ATW) and three-way interaction effects (country  $\times$  gender  $\times$  ATW) on victim blame attribution were not found. This indicates that attitudes toward women have the same impact on attributions of blame regardless of the effects of country and gender. Thus, as noted in the introduction, gender inequality might still exist because some respondents in our sample did perceive gender roles in a traditional way, preferring male roles over female. And this might be related to tolerant attitudes toward violence against women.

### 3.3. Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

There are, certainly, limitations to this study, the foremost of which is the validation of the ATW scale we used. Unlike Hofstede, Hofstede, and Minkov (2010), we used the ATW scale devised by Spence and Helmreich (1978) to examine whether adult endorsement of traditional gender roles predicts victim blame attribution across three countries. Since there have been significant changes in male and female gender roles during the past twenty to thirty years, the scale might no longer be valid for measuring attitudes toward women. Considering that there are differences among cultures in gender role perceptions, future research should use another more recent, validated instrument, for example the Social Roles Questionnaire by Barber and Tucker (2006) or the Ambivalent Sexism Inventory by Glick et al. (2000).

Second, the scenario in this study focused only on the perception of male violence against women. However, according to a cross-national study on dating violence conducted

with college students in Japan, Taiwan, and the United States (Morinaga et al. 2011), women were more likely to express non-violent forms of aggression toward men (insulting, sulking, doing or saying something to spite their partners) and they expressed their aggression more often than men did. This suggests that women could be as aggressive as men if verbal aggression is included. Research is needed that assesses male and female perceptions of women's aggression against men.

Third, attitudes about women's alcohol consumption vary across cultures. Thus, our depiction of a married woman going out with her friends to party until midnight might have caused participants to blame her more than they would have if she had not been drinking – especially in Asian cultures. We highly recommend that further research consider this issue.

Finally, our sample might not be representative of college students in each country, which might lead to bias of our results. Moreover, there might be some differences in perceptions of intimate partner violence and gender roles between student populations and other populations (older, less affluent, rural). The primary reason for the belief that violence against women occurs more often in urban than rural areas is that violence against women in rural areas is vastly underreported. Moreover, according to Carlson and Worden (2005), residents in rural areas are usually described as traditional and conservative in their social attitudes; legal and criminal justice responses to intimate violence are typically described as limited (Carlson and Worden 2005). As such, battered women in rural areas suffer the same problems as battered women everywhere, and even worse due to lack of resources for women (McCue 2007). Based on these reasons, people in rural areas might blame the victim of violence more than those in urban areas. Hence, additional studies using multi-mode sampling are needed to confirm the results.

This study focused only on intimate violence in marital and dating relationships. Since same-sex marriage has been legalized in many countries, more gay couples are allowed to get married. A homosexual person in a same-sex relationship who experiences dating violence or domestic viol-

ence may face many of the same issues as an abused heterosexual person. Also, victim blame attribution towards homosexuals who are victims of intimate partner violence might vary across countries depending on heterosexuals' attitudes toward homosexuals.

In conclusion, victim-blaming can have many negative effects on the innocent victims of violence. In addition to experiencing distress, they may fear secondary victimiz-

ation through blame from those from whom they seek help and thus may be less likely to report future abuse (George and Martinez 2002). Our findings that traditional gender role attitudes correlate significantly with victim blame attributions in Japan, the United States, and China confirm the findings of other studies. Our findings support the need to consider cultural factors (such as Confucianism) to better understand the psychological processes of victim blame attributions.

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