
Asian Family Violence Report

**A study of the Chinese, Cambodian, Korean, South Asian
and Vietnamese Communities in Massachusetts**

Prepared by

Marianne R. Yoshioka, Ph.D., M.S.W.
Columbia University School of Social Work

Quynh Dang
Asian Task Force Against Domestic Violence

with

Nanda Shewmangal
Carmen Chan
Rev. Cheng Imm Tan



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Marianne R. Yoshioka, Ph.D., M.S.W. Columbia University School of Social Work

Marianne R. Yoshioka, Ph.D., M.S.W., is an Assistant Professor of Social Work at Columbia University. She teaches in the areas of clinical practice and research methods. Her professional interests include domestic violence among immigrant populations, HIV prevention, and the design of culturally appropriate intervention. Presently, she is directing a project examining cultural forces and social service experiences of Asian victims of domestic violence. Dr. Yoshioka has worked as a social worker in the area of addictions and marriage and family therapy.

Quynh Dang

Quynh Dang is the Program Director of the Asian Task Force Against Domestic Violence. She has coordinated several research initiatives at the Asian Task Force including the study of Vietnamese patients at a community health center and a research project with Michigan State University. She serves on the Board of Directors of Jane Doe, Inc., and on the boards of several other community organizations.

Asian Task Force Against Domestic Violence, Inc.

The mission of the Asian Task Force Against Domestic Violence (Asian Task Force) is to eliminate family violence and to strengthen Asian families and communities. Founded in 1987 to address the high incidence of domestic violence in the Asian communities, the Asian Task Force advocates and develops culturally competent services and education to address and prevent domestic violence. In 1994, the Asian Task Force opened New England's first and only shelter for battered Asian women and their children. Today the Asian Task Force's programs include a 24-hour multilingual hotline, an emergency shelter, a safe home, advocacy and case management, community education, and outreach. The Asian Task Force is a non-profit 501(c)3 organization.

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Executive Summary

In the last decade, members of the Asian communities of Massachusetts have become increasingly aware of the problem of family violence. As the size of the Asian communities has grown, the number of women living with violence has increased. The lack of natural, informal support networks among recent immigrant populations, a sense of isolation stemming from language barriers, underemployment or underemployment, and the experience of discrimination cause many women to live in fear with few alternatives. According to the report of the National Violence Against Women Survey (1999) Asian women are the least likely to formally report any kind of physical victimization.

Overall, there are relatively few reports of family violence in the Asian community in police and court records. Although operating at full capacity, mainstream domestic violence agencies serve very few Asian women. For many Asian women, services for family violence are inaccessible. There are too few law enforcement personnel who speak Asian languages; there are few services available to help women; many immigrant adults are unaccustomed to using formal services to solve personal problems; and deep cultural issues of privacy, obligation and shame prevent women from reaching out.

The purpose of this report is twofold: (1) to educate service providers and policy makers about the complexity of family violence within the Asian communities; and (2) to help members of Asian communities start a dialogue about family violence. Before we can confront family violence, we must first begin to understand it, de-mystify it, and take responsibility for it. A focus of this report is on identifying and understanding family violence attitudes in the Cambodian, Chinese, Korean, South Asian, and Vietnamese communities. In addition to beliefs about wife abuse, the experience of corporal punishment, witnessing family violence as a child, and beliefs concerning help seeking for battered women were examined. In this report, we present the findings from a community survey of Asian men and women about their perceptions of family violence and the extent to which they hold attitudes that support it. The survey findings are

supplemented where possible by other Asian family violence research in the Massachusetts area.

Of the 607 participants, a total of 57% of the participants were women and 43% were men. On average they were 35 years old. The vast majority of this group were immigrants to the United States (74%), followed by U. S. citizens (18%). The remaining participants were in the country on a

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temporary basis. Overall, this was a well educated group, with 61% having had some post-high school education. There were some notable differences in the demographic characteristics of the five communities. The majority of the Chinese and Korean participants were women while the majority of the Vietnamese, Cambodian, and South Asian groups were men. The Southeast Asian participants were comprised almost exclusively of immigrants (88–96%). Immigrants represented 60–75% of the remaining 3 groups.

Overall, the use of corporal punishment within these Asian communities was high, with 69% of the respondents reporting being hit as children. Between one quarter and almost one half of all the participants said that they know a woman who is in an abusive relationship. In terms of witnessing violence between one's parents, there was wide variation. In contrast to the 8% of the South Asian group who reported witnessing their father hit their mother, approximately 30% of the Korean group did so. Additionally, 5% of the South Asians

reported having witnessed their mother hit their father while 28% of the Cambodians witnessed this. There was also wide variation across communities in the percentage of individuals who report knowing an Asian man who is physically abused by a woman. While only 3% of Koreans reported knowing a battered man, 37% of Cambodian reported that they did. The Southeast Asian groups report the highest attitude scores indicating that, relative to the Chinese, Korean, and South Asians, they hold family violence attitudes more strongly. Finally, there was tremendous variation across the

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groups in terms of where they believe a battered woman should turn for help. Relatively high percentages of South Asians saw formal helpers such as the police, therapists, and agencies as credible options. In contrast, very few of the Korean participants endorsed these options. Almost 30% of the Korean respondents saw not telling anyone or telling a family member as best options for a battered woman.

The findings suggest that overall, Asian men and women do not support family violence, as their scores on an attitudinal measure were low. There were some notable differences and variations in the scores of these communities underscoring the fallacy of Asians as a monolithic group. The Southeast Asian participants tended to hold more strongly patriarchal attitudes than the remaining groups. Male privilege attitudes were influenced by educational level, immigration status, and experience witnessing family violence as a child. In almost all cases, men of all ethnicities held attitudes supportive of family violence more than women.

We asked respondents for their explanations of why family violence happens. Their reasons fell into six categories. These categories are, in descending order of endorsement

- 1. There is something wrong with the husband as a person;*
- 2. There was something wrong with the husband at that time;*
- 3. It was the wife's fault;*
- 4. The problem is in their relationship;*
- 5. He had a bad childhood;*
- 6. Social and/or cultural beliefs that oppress women.*

What was most readily apparent from the responses was the overwhelming extent to which respondents perceive family violence as the personal problem of the husband. While the batterer clearly has responsibility for the abuse, research shows that family violence is a function of batterer characteristics, environmental stressors (such as poverty, poor neighborhoods), and availability of social support.

In addition to these survey findings, the report presents the results of many focus group discussions. The outcomes of these rich discussions are invaluable to understanding the needs and wants of Asian battered women. Women identified a number of institutional and cultural barriers to obtaining assistance:

- Chinese group participants felt that many Chinese believe in fate and destiny and that this orientation may contribute to an acceptance of difficult family situations. Chinese families are paternalistic and value social status, community reputation, and respect for the aged. Because of this they felt that Chinese tend to “keep bad things in the closet.” There is strong social pressure on women to stay with their children and not to get divorced. Divorce brings shame on the family name, and women may be afraid of growing old and being single.
- Members of a Korean focus group pointed out that Buddhism and Confucianism are important in Korean culture. This religious background emphasizes the “cycle of life” where men are the rulers of the family, receiving more privilege

in the cycle. Group members felt that a Korean woman living with violence would remain silent, not letting other people know and not wanting others to look down on her. To prevent shame to the family, she will try to solve problems by herself and not to let out the “family secret.” She may believe that the violence was a consequence of something she did wrong. She takes the responsibility and blame on herself.

- Members of a South Asian focus group felt that the male dominated society plays a role. Daughters in South Asian cultures are “given away” when they marry. Women who leave an abusive home would experience tremendous stigma. Group members clarified that the practice of an arranged marriage does not contribute to family violence but the view of women as property does. Stigma was identified as a leading reason why many South Asian women do not use formal services. Many women are financially dependent on their husbands, and using shelters or legal recourse bring with it financial considerations and insecurity about life after divorce.
- A Vietnamese focus group recognized that the father is the head who supports the family and thus has the right to “teach” his wife, control her and abuse her. Because men can find work more easily, their wives are financially dependent. Women do not speak up against their husbands because they are afraid that their husbands will leave. She must tolerate his abuses, affairs and drinking.
- A Cambodian focus group felt that when Cambodians learn of an abusive situation, they are apt to believe that the woman deserved it and will blame the woman for breaking up the family. Men feel that they have lost power and control because their value as the head of household is diminished as a result of their wives and children’s employment. They also commented that post-traumatic stress disorder might play a role.

Implications

Address the high rate of family violence in the Asian communities.

An astounding 25-38% of the entire sample reported knowing a woman who met at least one criteria of abuse. It is imperative that we acknowledge the scope and seriousness of this problem. We cannot hide behind cultural excuses.

Understand the diversity of Asian communities

Significant differences were found in each of the communities of the Asian groups in this study. Understanding the differences between ethnic groups and within each group allows us to better shape service and education programs to meet the needs of different Asian communities.

Address the high rates of corporal punishment in Asian families

The experience of corporal punishment appears to be the norm among the Asian men and women in the study. Asian communities must question the widespread use of corporal punishment. Social service agencies must help families to develop non-violence discipline, to educate about children’s and parents rights.

Investigate alternative models that support the family in providing options to family violence

Divorce and independence from an abusive home and use of restraining orders are common actions taken to protect women. Most Asian women want

to find ways to keep their families together and end the abuse. The challenge for the battered women's movement and the Asian communities is to investigate alternative models that support the family in providing options to end family violence.

Improve accessibility to existing services and increase endorsement and utilization of social service and law enforcement networks

- Educate the community about services, address the shame, stigma and mistrust associated with services.

Focus groups cited shame, stigma, and mistrust of services as major reasons why women don't seek help. Social service agencies and law enforcement can address these concerns in their outreach to the communities and in the programs that they offer.

- Improve linguistic accessibility of services

It is imperative that battered women have a chance to receive help in their first language. To increase language accessibility, it is important that written materials are translated into multiple Asian languages and that the numbers of helping personnel with Asian language facility be increased.

- Educate social service providers about domestic violence and cultural sensitivity in order to increase awareness, sensitivity and response to family violence.

Social service providers who are adequately familiar with Asian family violence are better equipped to challenge the prevailing myths and to support victims.

- Educate about victims' rights and the role of the police and courts in order to de-mystify and assuage fears.

Dealing with the police and courts is an overwhelming and difficult process. Asian immigrant women are even less familiar with the laws, with their rights, and with the legal process.

Increase education efforts about family violence to address the shame that prevents men and women from getting the assistance they need.

In tailoring our outreach messages and interventions, we should address shame and incorporate the beliefs of specific ethnic groups, age ranges, gender, and people with different levels of education.

Talk to funders and legislators about family violence in the Asian community, making it a priority in funding programs

In order to break through the myth of the model minority, we need to persistently and clearly advocate for ourselves. Only by doing so will the needs of Asian communities be recognized and programs for Asian families be funded.

Promote research on family violence in Asian communities

Much more information about Asian family violence needs to be gathered. A vast amount of research exists addressing family violence, but only a small proportion of it pertains to Asian families. We need prevalence studies to determine the scope and severity of the problem, we need to understand how social, personal, and cultural factors impede and/or facilitate the onset of violence, and we need to understand women's help-seeking patterns.

Introduction

Suma is in the United States with her husband on his work visa. He is a research scientist in a major hospital. Suma is a housewife. Although she would like to work or go to school, her husband forbids her. She doesn't know anyone in the United States. Her only friends are the wives of her husband's friends. He doesn't allow her to call her family in India and sometimes doesn't give her money for the stamps to send a letter. He withholds letters from her family unless she obeys his commands. He doesn't give her enough money for their living expenses and blames her when they don't have enough household supplies and food. He says if she complains to anyone about him, no one would believe her since he is a respected doctor and there are no signs of abuse. He threatens that if she tries to leave him, he will kill her. Besides, if she left him, she would become undocumented.

Linh's husband frequently goes out drinking with his friends on Saturday nights. He comes home at 1:30 in the morning drunk and hungry and expects her to get up to cook for him. This time, she refuses to get up. He drags her out of bed by her hair and yells at her. The children hear the noise and cry. Usually, the night would end with an argument and a beating until he was exhausted. But this time, the police came and took him away. The police try to talk to her but she can't understand them. Linh and her children are awake at 3:45 am. She is wondering where the police took her husband and what will happen to her and her children.

Mei's new boyfriend has become more and more possessive. He calls her on the cell phone constantly to monitor her whereabouts, and accuses her of seeing other men. He had said that she could prove she loved him only by sleeping with him. She did but that didn't assure him for long. He is even more jealous, arguing with her and sometimes forcing her to have sex with him. He spreads intimate information about her among their friends, telling them how she performs in bed. He has taken nude pictures of her while she was sleeping. Their arguments are heated and she tries to break up with him. He threatens to tell her family that she is a slut and to distribute the pictures.

During the last decade, family violence has emerged as a critical issue in the Asian communities of the United States. Many high profile domestic violence homicides drew public attention while at the same time, Asian reporting of domestic violence and service utilization remain low. In 1999, the Asian Task Force Against Domestic Violence provided services to a total of 215 battered Asian women. This figure is more than a 300% increase from 1995.

There are several factors that have contributed to the growing demand for partner violence services in Asian communities. First, Asians are one of the fastest growing immigrant groups in the United States. Data show that the number of Asians in Massachusetts increased by 30% between 1990 and

1998 (U.S. Census 1999). According to the 1990 Census, there were 53,545 Chinese, 18,885 Asian Indians, 14,653 Vietnamese, 13,849 Cambodians, and 12,124 Koreans in the state. These figures are underestimates both due to the chronic under-reporting of minority populations in the Census and overall population growth. According to the report of the National Violence Against Women Survey, (1999), approximately 25% of the women in the study reported having been raped and/or physically assaulted by a current or former spouse. They also found that Asian women are the least likely to formally report any kind of physical victimization. Based on these figures, it is reasonable to assume that there has been an increase in the last decade in the number of Asian women requiring services to address family violence

as the Asian population in Massachusetts has increased.

Beyond the increase in the numbers of Asians in Massachusetts, there are other social–psychological factors that are important to note. Recent immigrants lack the informal support networks customary in their native countries. Furthermore, the sense of isolation among women is often compounded by their limited command of English. Family violence advocates report that many Asian immigrant families find themselves unemployed or underemployed, struggling with discrimination, immigration worries, and maintaining family life in a new country with very different expectations for men and women’s roles. While stress and lack of support are not excuses for family violence, they are important factors that may contribute to it.

Overall, there are relatively few reports of family violence in the Asian community in police and court records. Although operating at full capacity, mainstream domestic violence agencies serve very few Asian women. For many Asian women, services for partner violence are inaccessible. There are few services available to help women; too few law enforcement personnel that speak Asian languages; many immigrant adults are unaccustomed to using formal services to solve personal problems; and deep cultural issues of privacy, obligation and shame prevent women from reaching out.

The research described in this report is the most comprehensive study to date¹ addressing family violence attitudes in the Asian communities. It’s scope is to examine attitudes pertaining to heterosexual marriage relationships. It is unique because it compares and contrasts five Asian groups. Too often in practice and research, the differences between Asian communities are glossed over. While there are some similarities in terms of cultural themes and social structures, there is also diversity. One of the primary purposes of this report is to help the men and women influencing family violence policy and providing services to understand complex issues of family violence among

1. The research draws upon the responses of a large convenience sample of men and women who attended one of 5 community fairs. As such, the sample is not representative and the findings are not generalizable. The research should be regarded as exploratory. Regardless, the findings have great utility in beginning to understanding the variation in family violence attitudes across the five Asian communities sampled.

the various Asian groups. By reading this report, it is hoped that policy makers will take into account the unique barriers confronting Asian women in finding help, and that prevention and treatment services may be better tailored to Asian communities.

The second purpose of this report is to help members of Asian communities start a dialogue about family violence. In order to confront it, we must first begin to understand it, de-mystify it, and take responsibility for

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it. A focus of this report is on identifying and understanding family violence attitudes in the Chinese, Korean, Vietnamese, Cambodian, and South Asian communities. Understanding attitudes are a critical part of learning how to address family violence because attitudes shape behavior (Finn, 1986). Understanding how people think about domestic violence can help us to understand the roots of violence, to what extent individuals find violence appropriate in given situations, and to what extent individuals think domestic violence is a personal problem rather than a community problem. If we can identify the extent to which Asian communities see domestic violence as a problem, we can better target education, prevention, and treatment services to those who are in the greatest need.

In the following pages, we will present the findings from a large community survey of Asian men and women about their perceptions of domestic violence and the extent to which they hold attitudes that support it. These survey findings will be bolstered by summaries of focus groups that were held with community members in an attempt to better understand what some of the numbers mean. Additionally, where possible, we will present other Asian family violence research conducted in the Massachusetts area. We have talked to family violence counselors and scholars in an attempt to include as much information as possible on this important topic. In reading this report, it will be become clear that family violence is an important issue in the Asian communities that requires a culturally appropriate response.

What are Family Violence Attitudes?

Family violence attitudes are those beliefs that support a man's right to use physical and/or emotional force with a female intimate partner and support the use of violence in specific situations. It is important to note that not all individuals who support family violence attitudes will be violent

toward an intimate partner. However, it is also true that violence can only occur in a context that supports the use of violence and purports that men have rights to discipline and/or control their female partners (Finn, 1986).

What do We Know About Family Violence Attitudes?

Prior research has shown that most individuals do not approve explicitly of wife beating however, they may see it as justifiable in certain situations (Straus, Steinmetz, & Gelles, 1980). In one study of 422 adult women, the researchers found that under 3% of the sample saw physical violence (e.g., hitting, kicking) as appropriate, but 19% felt that violence may be used justifiably in situations where the wife provokes the husband (e.g., flirting with another man, having an affair) (Gentemann, 1984). In another study, the respondents felt that the use of physical violence was justified in situations involving sexual impropriety (Greenblat, 1985). There is also a substantial body of research that finds that individuals who witness family violence as children or who were abused themselves are more likely to endorse violence as a means to

resolve conflict as adults (Carden, 1996).

There are also possibly gender differences in attitudes toward domestic violence. In general, women have been found to be less tolerant of domestic violence (Finn, 1986; Greenblat, 1985; Koski & Mangold, 1988; Rose & Saunders, 1986; Saunders et al., 1987). Men tend to view domestic violence as a private issue that should be addressed within the marriage. While these studies have been informative, Asian communities have been left out, and differences between Asian ethnic groups have gone unexamined. This report is one of the first of its size to examine Asian attitudes regarding family violence generally, and differences and similarities between ethnic groups specifically.

Asian Attitudes and Family Violence²

Most of the studies conducted to date have focused on one Asian community at a time precluding the opportunity to compare across communities. Yick and Agbayai-Siewert (1997) surveyed 31 Chinese families by telephone. These researchers found that their respondents disapproved of violence overall, however, about 50% felt that violence was justified in certain situations. These included learning of a wife's extramarital affair, a wife losing emotional control, or gender role violations such as a wife making a financial decision without her husband's approval. Older respondents and men were more tolerant of the use of force as a means to resolve family conflict. Possibly,

older adults adhere more strongly to traditional beliefs about family and gender roles and differences in attitudes between men and women may be the result of cultural notions of male privilege and authority. Ho (1990) also reported that based on a focus group study involving Chinese Americans, most Chinese Americans disapprove of domestic violence. Even so, they do not think a battered Chinese woman would seek help outside of her family because it is critical that privacy be maintained.

2. Excerpt from Yoshioka and DiNoia (1999).

A study of Cambodian women revealed similar themes. Strong emphasis was placed on proper behavior for Cambodian women; wives were expected to obey and respect their husbands and to accept the problems of the marriage (Kulig, 1984). Great importance was placed on controlling a woman's sexuality as her behavior reflects on the family. As such, women were more likely to be held responsible for marital problems (Caplan, 1987). Cambodian women who are physically abused are viewed as having deserved punishment. When Cambodian women try to address family violence, the two more common means are nonconfrontation and withdrawal. Women reported that they would "talk softly" and/or "do nothing" (Frye & D'Avanzo, 1994, p. 72). In Cambodian culture as with most Asian cultures, value is placed on harmony, balance and the avoidance of conflict (Ebihara, 1968). One of the study participants said, "most Khmer men, they hit their wives but the women don't know who can help" (Frye & D'Avanzo, 1994, p. 72).

Bui and Morash (1999) compared the experiences of 10 Vietnamese battered women with 10 non-battered women to identify what factors may contribute to the problem. They found that male domination in family decision making, family conflicts arising over chang-

ing family norms and values, husbands' lack of educational attainment, and patriarchal beliefs each played a role.

In the Korean community, Rhee (1997) has pointed out that there are some prominent Korean cultural factors and family values that may influence the development of attitudes supportive of family violence. For example, Korean society is patriarchal and women are required to obey their husbands. As Korean women have increasingly entered the labor force, these traditional gender roles began to break down. When families can not adapt, Korean women may be at increased risk for family violence if their husbands still strongly adhere to traditional attitudes favoring dominant and subordinate relations between husbands and wives.

In the South Asian communities, Ganguly (1998) conducted doctoral research with a sample of 181 men and women from the Southern California region. She hypothesized that being highly acculturated to western culture would result in lower tolerance for family violence and this was supported in the findings. She found that individuals with less education, who had witnessed family violence as children, and who held traditional attitudes toward women were most likely to also hold pro-family violence attitudes.

Asian Cultural Factors that Influence Family Violence³

Asian cultures are community oriented and characterized by a respect for authority. The teachings of Confucianism and Buddhism influence Asian values, which emphasize harmonious interpersonal relationships and interdependence. The interests of the family take precedence over those of the individual (Hsu, 1970; Kitao & Kikumura, 1976; Lee, 1996; Root et al., 1986). Harmony is prized. Because conflict may disrupt group relations or bring guilt and shame to the family, avoidance of conflict is a core value (Ho, 1996; Hu & Chen, 1999; McLaughlin & Brau, 1998).

In a society that values interpersonal relationships, the role and status of individuals are clear. Within this complex social web, hierarchy and power differences between individuals and groups are accepted (Hofstede, 1984; Kirkbridge, Tang, & Westwood, 1991). There is an expectation that individuals will conform and perform within their roles based on age,

gender, and social class (Lee, 1996). Divorce is highly stigmatized in Asian cultures (Lee, 1996; Singh, 1986). Family disputes are most commonly settled within families, often with the help of older family members who serve as mediators. When marital problems do occur, outside intervention is strongly discouraged for fear that this will bring shame and dishonor to the family. In many Asian cultures, suffering, perseverance, and acceptance are valued (Ho, 1996).

In a cultural context where respect, hierarchy, and interdependence among family members are highly valued, preservation of family honor is of utmost importance. Feelings of shame and anticipation of the withdrawal of support from family, friends, and community are significant barriers for women seeking help when problems are occurring (Catolico, 1997; Dasgupta & Warrier, 1998; Ho, 1999; Patel, 1992).

3. Excerpt from Yoshioka and DiNoia (1999).

The Survey

In the summer and spring of 1999, a total of 607 Chinese, Korean, Vietnamese, Cambodian, and South Asian women and men took part in a survey of attitudes about family violence. The respondents were present at community events around the Boston and Lowell areas of Massachusetts. They were asked if they would like to complete a short questionnaire. The questionnaires had been translated into 5 Asian languages (Chinese, Vietnamese, Khmer, Korean, and Hindi) and were also available in English. Following the analysis of the survey data, a focus group was held in each of the Asian communities. The purpose of these focus groups was to provide an opportunity for community members to comment and reflect upon the quantitative data generated from the survey. The questionnaire had 6 parts:

1. Respondents' Background

Respondents were asked to state their age, gender, place of birth, date of immigration and level of formal education.

2. Respondents' childhood

Respondents were asked whether they had been hit by their parent(s) when they were growing up, whether they had witnessed their mother being hit by her partner or their father being hit by his partner. Other research has shown that people who witnessed family violence as a child or were hit as a child are more likely to have attitudes that support family violence as adults.

3. Knowing a battered woman or a battered man

Respondents were asked four questions to identify whether they knew a battered woman. These questions are commonly used in emergency rooms. The language was adapted so that respondents did not answer about themselves. They were also asked whether they knew a battered man.

4. Beliefs and attitudes about family violence

We used the Revised Attitudes toward Wife Abuse scale (See Appendix). Respondents read a total of 14 sentences pertaining to attitudes about wife abuse. They circled how true they thought each statement was. The Revised Attitudes Toward Wife Abuse Scale gives us three scores (A through C):

A. Male Privilege

Scores on this scale range from 4 to 24.

The higher the score, the more the individual believes that men have the right to discipline their wives and that wives should obey their husbands. The questions that are a part of the male privilege score are:

- A husband has the right to discipline his wife.
- A man is the ruler of his home.
- A husband can expect to have sex with his wife whenever he wants it.
- Some wives seem to ask for beatings from their husband.

B. Situational Approval of Violence

Scores on this scale range from 6 to 24. The higher the score, the more the individual believes that there are certain situations when a husband's use of violence against his wife is justified. The questions that are a part of the situational approval score are:

A husband has the right to hit his wife if she

- Had sex with another man.
- Refused to cook or to keep the house clean.
- Refused to have sex with him.
- Made fun of him at a party.
- Told friends that he was sexually pathetic.
- Nags him too much.

C. Perceived Lack of Alternatives for Battered Women:

Scores on this scale range from 4 to 24. The higher the score, the more the individual

believes that there are no real alternatives (like divorce, or moving out of the home) for battered women. The questions that are a part of the perceived alternatives scores are:

- A wife should move out of the house if her husband hits her.
- A husband is never justified in hitting his wife.
- A husband should be arrested if he hits his wife.
- Wife beating is grounds for divorce.

5. Respondents' opinions about resources that battered women should turn to for help

A total of 12 options were given (e.g. shelters, police, doctor, and community agency). Respondents circled all the options they thought should be used.

6. Respondents' opinions about why some husbands beat their wives

Respondents were asked to write in their own opinion about why family violence occurs. We examined hundreds of answers and developed rough categories into which these answers fall.

Attitudes toward Family Violence among the Massachusetts Asian Community

Approximately 2.5% of the Asian population in the United States reside in Massachusetts (U.S. Census, 1990). Although this number may be small relative to those of other states, it is growing steadily. The Boston area is home to the majority of Asian families, with Lowell the second largest concentration, but Asian communities can be found spread across

the state. There are over a dozen Asian ethnic communities in Massachusetts, the largest of which are Chinese, Asian Indians, Vietnamese, Cambodian, and Koreans.

Here is some information about the Asian men and women who participated in the survey of attitudes.

| Description of Survey Participants | | | | | | |
|---|--------------|----------------|---------------|-------------------|------------------|-----------------|
| | Total | Chinese | Korean | Vietnamese | Cambodian | S. Asian |
| Men | 42.6% | 30.6% | 39.0% | 67.0% | 54.0% | 54.0% |
| Women | 57.4% | 69.4% | 61.0% | 33.0% | 45.2% | 46.0% |
| AVERAGE AGE in years* | 35 yrs | 37 yrs | 31 yrs | 42 yrs | 30 yrs | 35 yrs |
| IMMIGRATION STATUS | | | | | | |
| Born in the U.S. | 18.6% | 26.7% | 13.6% | 2.7% | 9.1% | 21.0% |
| Immigrated | 74.1% | 71.0% | 14.6% | 95.9% | 87.9% | 67.0% |
| In the country temporarily | 6.3% | 1.6% | 24.8% | 1.4% | 1.5% | 7.0% |
| Visiting from somewhere else | 1.1% | 0.8% | 2.0% | 0% | 1.5% | 2.0% |
| EDUCATION | | | | | | |
| Less than high school | 6.5% | 12.3% | 0% | 4.0% | 15.5% | 0% |
| High School | 32.6% | 33.0% | 12.5% | 81.3% | 21.1% | 20.0% |
| At least some college | 60.9% | 54.7% | 87.5% | 14.7% | 63.4% | 80.0% |

* Standard deviations: Total (15 yrs), Chinese (17 yrs), Korean (10 yrs), Vietnamese (18 yrs), Cambodian (10 yrs) and S. Asian (13 yrs)

Overall, the use of corporal punishment within these Asian communities was high, with 69% of the respondents reporting having been hit as children. Between one quarter and almost one half of all the participants said that they know a woman who is in an abusive relationship as defined by at least one of the criteria that was used. In terms of witnessing violence between one's parents, there was wide variation. In contrast to the 8% of the South Asian group who reported witnessing their father hit their mother, approximately 30% of the Korean group reported so. Additionally, 5% of the South Asians reported witnessing their mother hit their father, while 28% of the Cambodians had. There was also wide variation across communities in the percentage of individuals who reported knowing an Asian man who is physically abused by a woman. While only 3% of Koreans reported knowing a battered man, 37% of Cambodian reported that they did. The Vietnamese and Cambodian groups reported the highest attitude scores indicating that, relative to the Chinese, Koreans, and South Asians, they held attitudes more tolerant to family violence. Finally, there was tremendous variation across the groups in terms of where they believed a battered woman should turn for help. A relatively high percentage of South Asians saw formal helpers such as the police, therapists, and agencies as credible options. In contrast, very few of the Korean participants endorsed these options. Almost 30% of the Korean respondents saw not telling anyone or telling a family member as the best options for a battered woman.

Childhood Experiences

- 69% of the respondents were hit regularly by their parents when they were growing up.
- 21% saw their mothers regularly hit their fathers.
- 17% saw their fathers regularly hit their mothers.

Do you know a battered woman?

- 26% of the respondent say they know a woman whose partner keeps her from seeing her friends and family.
- 25% say they know a woman whose partner keeps her from going to work.
- 38% say they know a woman, who has been shoved, pushed, slapped, hit, kicked, or suffered other injuries from her partner.
- 33% say they know a woman whose partner insults or humiliates her regularly.

Do you know a battered man?

- 12% of the respondents say they know a man who is being beaten by his partner.

Attitudes toward Wife Abuse

Male Privilege

(Total score possible 4-24)

- The average score on this scale was 8 (SD = 4, N= 508). This is a low score indicating that overall the respondents do not believe that a man has the right to discipline his wife, can expect sex whenever he wants it, is the ruler of his home, or that wives deserve beatings.
- Men score higher than women meaning that men hold attitudes of male privilege more strongly than women do.
- Having been hit as a child does not affect scores.
- Age does not influence scores.
- People with a high school education hold attitudes of male privilege more strongly than people with at least some college education.
- People who witnessed family violence as a child hold attitudes of male privilege more strongly than those who did not.

Situational Approval of Violence

(Total score possible 6-24)

- The average score on this scale was 9 (SD = 4, N= 490). Once again this is a relatively low score indicating that the respondents did not believe that there were situations where violence against a woman was justified.
- Older people score higher than younger people do, meaning that they believe more strongly that family violence may be justified in some specific situations.
- People with a high school education believe more strongly that family violence may be justified in some specific situations than people with at least some college education.
- Witnessing family violence as a child or being hit as a child does not affect scores.
- Men and women score just about the same.

Perceived Lack of Alternatives for Battered Women

(Total score possible 4-24)

- The average score on this scale was 9 (SD =4, N=492). This is a low score, meaning that overall the respondents overall believe that women do have the right to divorce and/or

leave a husband who hits her and/or the husband should be arrested.

- Age does not affect scores.
- Men score higher than women, meaning they do not see divorce, separation or arrest as options for battered women.
- People with a high school education are less likely to see divorce, separation or arrest as options for battered women than people with at least some college education.

Are there differences between the Groups?

Although none of the participants held attitudes supportive of family violence very strongly, there were some differences between the groups. In relative terms, the Southeast Asian participants expressed attitudes most tolerant of family violence. The Vietnamese and Cambodian participants held more strongly attitudes that support male privilege, that justify the use of violence in certain situations, and that support few alternatives to living with violence for battered women. The Chinese participants also more strongly supported the idea that there were certain situations in which violence against the wife may be justified. The comparison of group scores is below.²

2. These scores were significantly different from one another

Overall, the use of corporal punishment within these Asian communities was high, with 69% of the respondents reporting having been hit as children. Between one quarter and almost one half of all the participants said that they know a woman who is in an abusive relationship as defined by at least one of the criteria that was used.

| | Total | Chinese | Korean | Vietnamese | Cambodian | S. Asian |
|---|--------------|----------------|---------------|-------------------|------------------|-----------------|
| Male Privilege | 8.5 (4.3)* | 7.8 (3.9) | 8.1 (3.6) | 12.0 (5.6) | 9.1 (4.5) | 7.2 (3.2) |
| Situational Approval of Violence | 8.6 (3.9) | 9.0 (4.0) | 6.9 (2.1) | 10.3 (4.6) | 9.8 (4.7) | 7.1 (2.4) |
| Perceived Lack of Alternatives | 8.8 (4.4) | 7.9 (3.8) | 8.0 (3.7) | 10.7 (4.7) | 11.6 (5.5) | 8.4 (4.0) |

* the numbers in parenthesis represent the Standard Deviation

Male Privilege: $F_{4,503} = 15.523, p=.000$

Situational Approval of Violence: $F_{4,485} = 11.896, p=.000$

Perceived Lack of Alternatives: $F_{4,487} = 13.787, p=.000$

Tukey HSD post hoc tests were run to identify which groups differed statistically from others. The results indicate that in terms of Male Privilege, the Vietnamese are significantly different from all other groups. In terms of Situational Approval of Violence, Koreans and South Asians are significant different from all other groups except each other. Finally, in terms of Perceived Lack of Alternatives, Vietnamese and Cambodians are significantly different from all other groups but not from one another. There are no other significant group differences.)

Scores range from 4-24 for Male Privilege and Perceived Lack of Alternatives and from 6-24 for Situational Approval of Violence. Higher scores indicate that an individual believes more strongly that men have the right to discipline women, that there are some situations where violence against a woman is justified, and/or that battered women do not have options such as divorce to escape from violence. The scores in this table are the average scores of all the individuals in each community.

Are there differences between men and women?

In almost all cases, men hold attitudes supportive of family violence more strongly than women. The only exception to this is that the Chinese women in this sample believed more strongly than the men that there were some situations in which a husband is justified in using violence against his wife.

South Asian men and women are the most similar to each other (delete - in terms of) in their disapproval of attitudes of male privilege, which lies in great contrast to the other groups. In each of the other groups, men more strongly support attitudes of male privilege than their women counterparts.³

| | Chinese | Korean | Vietnam | Cambodian | S. Asian |
|---|----------------|---------------|----------------|------------------|-----------------|
| MALE PRIVILEGE | | | | | |
| Men | 9.3 (4.4) | 10.2 (3.6) | 13.2 (5.4) | 10.3 (4.4) | 7.1 (3.4) |
| Women | 7.1 (3.5) | 6.5 (2.5) | 10.3 (5.3) | 7.3 (4.0) | 7.3 (3.0) |
| SITUATIONAL APPROVAL OF VIOLENCE | | | | | |
| Men | 8.5 (3.4) | 7.3 (2.0) | 10.6 (4.2) | 10.8 (5.0) | 7.8 (3.0) |
| Women | 9.1 (4.2) | 6.5 (1.8) | 9.8 (5.4) | 8.6 (4.1) | 6.4 (1.0) |
| PERCEIVED LACK OF ALTERNATIVES | | | | | |
| Men | 8.6 (3.7) | 8.7 (3.4) | 11.6 (4.8) | 12.0 (5.6) | 8.5 (4.4) |
| Women | 7.7 (3.8) | 7.4 (3.7) | 9.2 (4.0) | 11.2 (5.6) | 8.2 (3.5) |

3. Statistical testing indicates that there were significant main effects for ethnicity and gender on all sub-scales. There were no statistically significant ethnicity x gender interactions.

Male Privilege: Ethnicity $F_{4,490} = 11.532, p = .000$; Gender $F_{1,490} = 32.666, p = .000$

Situational Approval: Ethnicity $F_{4,474} = 10.522, p = .000$; Gender $F_{1,474} = 5.26, p = .022$

Perceived Lack of Alternatives: Ethnicity $F_{4,476} = 10.877, p = .000$; Gender $F_{1,476} = 6.741, p = .01$

Where to get help

Participants were asked where they felt a battered woman should turn for help. The following table shows the percentage of respondents who answered in each category.

| Where should battered women turn for help? (% percentage) | | | | | | |
|---|--------------|----------------|---------------|----------------|------------------|-----------------|
| | Total | Chinese | Korean | Vietnam | Cambodian | S. Asian |
| The police | 49 | 52 | 27 | 49 | 47 | 74 |
| A crisis hotline | 22 | 23 | 7 | 23 | 22 | 39 |
| A women's shelter | 31 | 36 | 17 | 29 | 18 | 50 |
| An agency serving the community | 18 | 18 | 5 | 18 | 19 | 38 |
| A therapist | 22 | 17 | 14 | 31 | 18 | 48 |
| A doctor | 8 | 7 | 1 | 18 | 6 | 16 |
| A traditional practitioner (herbalist) | 5 | 4 | 2 | 3 | 8 | 16 |
| A family member | 34 | 36 | 29 | 17 | 23 | 66 |
| A friend | 42 | 37 | 41 | 29 | 44 | 82 |
| A co-worker | 17 | 16 | 11 | 17 | 19 | 30 |
| A fortune teller | 4 | 2 | 6 | 1 | 10 | 2 |
| Shouldn't tell anyone | 18 | 18 | 29 | 9 | 22 | 5 |

Why Do Some Husbands Beat Their Wives?

Theories of family violence typically fall into four main categories:

- *psychological theories focussing on the deficits of the batterer*
- *sociological theories emphasizing the detrimental effects of a patriarchal and oppressive society for women,*
- *social learning theories that focus on the importance of growing up with and/or witnessing violence as a child in shaping adult behavior, and*
- *biological explanations that look at the role of hormones and/or alcohol and drugs on behavior.*

We asked respondents for their explanations of why family violence happens. Their reasons are listed below with the number of people who answered similarly. We have put similar reasons into the same category. What is most readily apparent from these responses is the overwhelming extent to which the respondents perceive family violence as the personal problem of the husband. While the batterer clearly has responsibility for the abuse, research shows that family violence is function of batterer characteristics, environmental stressors (such as poverty, poor neighborhoods), and availability of social support.

Explanation for family violence

Number of individuals who responded this way

THERE IS SOMETHING WRONG WITH THE HUSBAND AS A PERSON

| | |
|--|------------|
| He wants power and domination and He needs control | 72 |
| He has a bad personality | 33 |
| He has low self esteem/he is insecure | 29 |
| He is stupid/He is ignorant/He's an idiot | 21 |
| He has mental problems / He's possessive | 15 |
| He has no patience /He doesn't have self control | 12 |
| Total | 182 |

THERE WAS SOMETHING WRONG WITH THE HUSBAND AT THAT TIME

| | |
|--|------------|
| He is frustrated / He has anger | 67 |
| He has a substance abuse or alcohol problem He was drunk | 22 |
| He is under stress | 17 |
| He was jealous / He went out of control | 7 |
| He has the physical strength | 3 |
| He's too small to hit other men (therefore he hits her) | 3 |
| He doesn't know how to show anger | 2 |
| It's because of his gambling | 1 |
| Total | 122 |

IT WAS THE WIFE'S FAULT

| | |
|------------------------------|-----------|
| She was unfaithful | 14 |
| She is not a good wife | 9 |
| She did something wrong | 6 |
| She hit him first | 4 |
| She challenged his authority | 3 |
| Total | 36 |

THE PROBLEM IS THEIR RELATIONSHIP

| | |
|-------------------------------------|-----------|
| There are money problems | 6 |
| They have family problems | 3 |
| They have a lack of communication | 3 |
| They are fighting about sex | 1 |
| It's a sexual turn on | 1 |
| They are incompatible | 1 |
| Because one of them wants a divorce | 1 |
| They had a misunderstanding | 1 |
| To protect honor | 1 |
| Total | 18 |

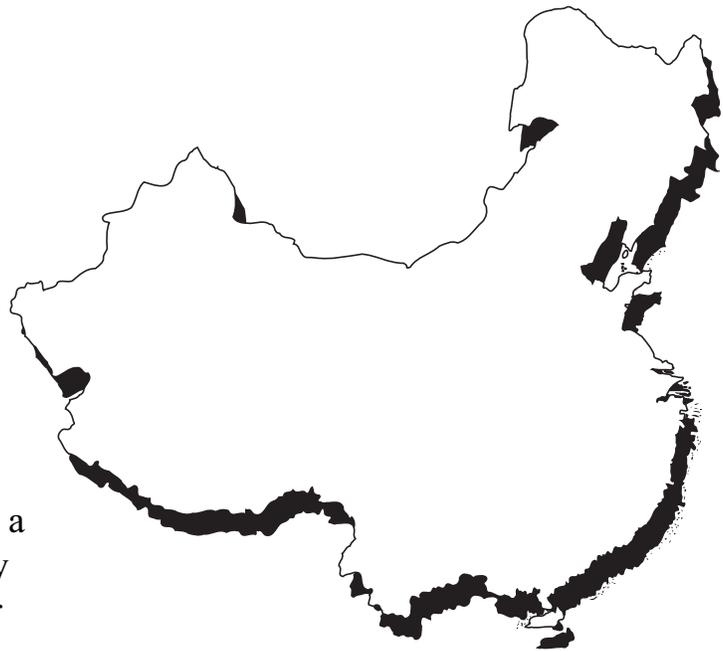
HE HAD A BAD CHILDHOOD

| | |
|--------------------------|-----------|
| He was abused as a child | 10 |
| He had a bad upbringing | 7 |
| Total | 17 |

SOCIAL AND/OR CULTURAL BELIEFS THAT OPPRESS WOMEN 3

The Chinese Community

家庭暴虐報告



- 24% of Chinese surveyed know a woman who has been physically abused or injured by her partner
- 61% of Chinese surveyed were hit regularly by their parents when they were growing up
- 9% of the respondents know a man who is being beaten by his partner
- For help, Chinese respondents said a woman should turn to: police (59%), friends (42%), family members (34%), shelter (36%). 18% say the woman shouldn't tell anyone.
- Older Chinese respondents were more tolerant of the use of force and saw more situations in which violence is justified.
- Younger Chinese respondents were less likely to see divorce, leaving the abuser, or arrest as viable alternatives than older respondents.

According to the U.S. Census of 1990, there were 53,545 Chinese in Massachusetts. The Massachusetts Department of Public Health reports that the largest Chinese community may be found in Boston followed by Cambridge, Malden, Quincy, and Randolph. Chinese immigration into Massachusetts has fallen into 5 waves beginning in the 1800s. The first wave was comprised predominantly of merchants and seamen. The second wave was comprised mainly of laborers originally brought to Massachusetts to break a strike in North Adams. The third wave was comprised of scholars who were attracted to the advanced educational opportunities in the state. The fourth wave was comprised largely of ethnic Chinese emigrating as political refugees from Southeast Asia. The most recent wave of Chinese is from the rural province of Fukien. Many of these individuals have paid exorbitant fees to secure their passage to the United States.

Responses of Chinese Survey Participants

From the community survey, the following is a summary of responses from the Chinese participants

Childhood Experiences

- 61% of the respondents were hit regularly by their parents when they were growing up.
- 18% saw their mothers regularly hit their fathers.
- 18% saw their fathers regularly hit their mothers.

Do you know a battered woman?

- 14% of the respondent say they know a woman whose partner keeps her from seeing her friends and family.
- 15% say they know a woman whose partner keeps her from going to work.
- 24% say they know a woman, who has been shoved, pushed, slapped, hit, kicked, or suffered other injuries by her partner.
- 21% say they know a woman whose partner insults or humiliates her regularly.

Do you know a battered man?

- 9% of the respondents say they know a man who is being beaten by his partner.

Attitudes toward Wife Abuse

Male Privilege

(Total score possible 4-24)

- The average score on this scale was 8 (SD = 4, N= 224). This is a low score indicating that overall the respondents do not believe that a

man has the right to discipline his wife, can expect sex whenever he wants it, is the ruler of his home, or that wives deserve beatings.

- Men score higher than women meaning that men hold attitudes of male privilege more than women do.
- People who were hit as a child scored higher.
- Age does not influence scores.
- Level of education does not make a difference in people's scores.
- Being an immigrant does not make a difference.
- Seeing one parent (either mother or father) hit by the other didn't affect scores.

Situational Approval of Violence

(Total score possible 6-24)

- The average score on this scale was 9 (SD = 4, N= 222). This is a relatively low score indicating that the respondents did not believe that there are situations when violence against a woman was justified.
- Older people score higher than younger people.
- Men and women score just about the same.
- Education and childhood experiences do not affect scores.

Perceived Lack of Alternatives for Battered Women

(Total score possible 4-24)

- The average score on this scale was 8 (SD =4, N=215). This is a low score, meaning that the respondents overall believe that women do have the right to divorce and/or leave a husband who hits her and/or the husband should be arrested

-
- Younger people score higher than older people.
 - Men and women score approximately the same.
 - The level of education or childhood experiences does not influence scores.
 - Being an immigrant does not influence scores.

A Chinese focus group was held to discuss these findings. Group members were asked to comment on the finding that 24% of the Chinese survey participants said they knew a battered women and 9% said they knew a battered man. They felt that these figures were low because the question is limited to physical abuse only. In general the focus group members felt that there were cultural barriers that may prevent victims from reporting domestic violence incidents. For example, Chinese women do not want to present themselves as victims and so they are not willing to let other people know about family violence. This is likely a larger problem when the man is being battered. Group members agreed that society is more ready to accept women as victims than men.

The group members discussed the high rate of reported corporal punishment. They felt that Chinese and Americans have different value systems with regard to parenting. They pointed out that in China, there are no laws regulating parental discipline. Chinese families must educate themselves about the child discipline rules in the U.S. They considered that children in the U.S. may have more of a self-focus, placing value on their own feelings. As such, children may consider even minor punishments as abuse. Parents in the U.S. often lose control over their children. Finally, they felt that the line between discipline and abuse lies in “how the punishment was conducted.” Discipline is conducted with good intentions and follow-up. There is “nurturing” involved, not just a pure expression of anger. Similarly, they defined domestic violence in terms of whether someone was physically, financially, or emotionally hurt by someone who is supposed to take care of you.

Focus group members were asked whether they thought there are any cultural factors that contribute to family violence in the Chinese community. They responded that many Chinese believe in fate and destiny and that this orientation may contribute to an acceptance of difficult family situations. Chinese families are paternalistic, value respect and

deference to the aged, social status, and community reputation. Because of this they felt that Chinese tend to “keep bad things in the closet.” There is not equality between men and women. There are strong social pressures on women to stay with their children and not to get divorced. Divorce brings shame on the family name, and women may be afraid of growing old and being single. Also in native countries, fathers usually get custody of children so many women may not want to get divorced out of fear of losing their children.

In general the focus group members felt that there were cultural barriers that may prevent any victim from reporting domestic violence incidents. For example, Chinese women do not want to present themselves as victims and so they are not willing to let other people know about family violence.

The moderators noted that even though many Chinese respondents listed formal and informal supports that battered women could use to get help, in reality, Chinese battered women don’t use these services. The focus group members were asked to comment. They felt that the reasons why Chinese women didn’t use these resources were shame and fear. These feelings may be why Chinese women are reluctant to use the police. Their belief in destiny prevents them from seeing alternatives to their living circumstances. The Chinese community is still a relatively small community, and it is difficult to get help without others knowing. Some women may not know what help is actually available to them. They may feel isolated because they are immigrants. Finally, many services, such as shelters, carry negative connotations and feelings of degradation.

Recommendations

Overall, the Chinese respondents in this survey did not hold attitudes in support of family violence.

They did not believe that men are the rulers of their homes, nor do men have the right to discipline their wives. The use of violence could not be justified in certain domestic conflicts, women have the right to leave or divorce, and abusers should be arrested.

Many of the respondents were familiar with family violence as almost one-quarter reported knowing a woman who is abused and 18% grew up in homes in which they witnessed one parent hitting the other. The focus group thought that the number of people who are abused is higher, but those victims may be reluctant to tell anyone. Despite having attitudes that are intolerant to family violence, clearly, it is still a pervasive problem.

There were many group variations in this general picture. Men tended to believe more in male privilege than women. Older people thought that using violence is an acceptable response to family conflicts in some situations. Yet older people were also more likely to endorse the options to leave, divorce or arrest when violence is involved. On the other hand, younger people thought that the use of violence could not be justified, but neither could leaving, divorce, and arrest even in the case of family violence.

Immigration status and level of education were not factors that showed an effect on attitudes. Widely held notions that less educated people or people who recently immigrated hold more “traditional beliefs” that accept family violence were not found to be true among the respondents.

Many respondents were hit as children by their parents. Corporal punishment appears to be a common practice. The focus group attributed this to different views governing child discipline. The survey results show that being hit as children had long lasting affects. People who were hit as children tended to believe more in male privilege, that men are the rulers of their homes and that they have the right to discipline their wives. Being hit as a child corresponded to the belief that wives should be disciplined also.

In terms of recommendations on where battered women should go for help, respondents suggested the police (52%), a shelter (36%), friends (37%), or

family members (36%). Focus group participants thought that actual use of services would be lower due to shame, fear, and isolation. Nonetheless, the survey responses provide insight into the types of services that potentially will be utilized most by the community for assistance with family violence problems.

In light of these findings, suggested approaches to addressing family violence in the Chinese community include:

Increase outreach efforts:

- Incorporate the different beliefs of older and younger people.
- Address the shame experienced by victims and their families.
- Incorporate the different beliefs that men and women have about male privilege.
- Recognize that domestic violence is a community wide problem and not restricted to recent immigrants or those with less education.

Increase endorsement and utilization of social service and law enforcement networks:

- Educate about victims' rights and the role of the police and courts.
- Educate the community about services; address the shame, stigma and mistrust associated with services.
- Improve linguistic accessibility of services through hiring of bilingual staff and interpreters.

Address the high rate of corporal punishment:

- Increase parent education programs that teach about the laws in the U.S., the rights of children and parents, and alternative models of discipline.
- Increase parental support systems such as childcare.

The Korean Community

가정폭력 보고서



- 32% of Korean surveyed know a woman who has been physically abused or injured by her partner
- 80% of the respondents were hit regularly by their parents when they were growing up
- 3% of the respondents know a man who is being beaten by his partner
- Koreans said a battered woman should turn to a friend for help (41%), but felt that a woman should turn to a family member (29%) or not tell anyone (29%). Koreans had the highest percent of respondents who said that a woman should not tell anyone.
- Korean men surveyed hold attitudes that support domestic violence more than women.
- Focus group expressed that Koreans experience a feeling of powerlessness because they are immigrants. As a result, they exert power in their home, taking out their frustration on someone who has even less power.

The U. S. Census (1990) reports that there were 12,124 Koreans residing in Massachusetts in 1990. According to the Coalition for Healthy Korean Americans, there are a number of small Korean communities dispersed across the State. The largest communities may be found in Lexington, Acton, Andover, Cambridge, Brookline, Somerville, Lawrence and Somerville. Although Korean immigration into the United States began as early as the late 1880s, the numbers of migrants was relatively small until the onset of the Korean War from 1950-1953. In 1967, a change in immigration policy allowed entire Korean families to emigrate opening the way for growth in the Korean community. Over the next 30 years, close to 12,000 Koreans entered Massachusetts.

Responses of Korean Survey Participants

The following is a summary of the findings from the Korean men and women who participated in the survey.

Childhood Experiences

- 80% of the respondents were hit regularly by their parents when they were growing up.
- 17% saw their mothers regularly hit their fathers.
- 30% saw their fathers regularly hit their mothers.

Do you know a battered woman?

- 28% of the respondent say they know a woman whose partner keeps her from seeing her friends and family.
- 29% say they know a woman whose partner keeps her from going to work.
- 32% say they know a woman who has been shoved, pushed, slapped, hit, kicked, or suffered other injuries by her partner.
- 24% say they know a woman whose partner insults or humiliates her regularly.

Do you know a battered man?

- 3% of the respondents say they know a man who is being beaten by his partner.

Attitudes toward Wife Abuse Male Privilege

(Total score possible 4-24)

- The average score on this scale was 8 (SD = 3, N= 99). This is a low score indicating that the respondents do not believe that a man has the right to discipline his wife, can expect sex whenever he wants it, is the ruler of his home,

or that wives deserve beatings.

- Men score higher than women meaning that men hold attitudes of male privilege more than women do.
- People who witnessed their father hitting their mother scored higher than people who did not witness this.
- Education, age, being hit as a child, and witnessing one's father being hit do not influence scores.
- Being an immigrant does not influence scores.

Situational Approval of Violence

(Total score possible 6-24)

- The average score on this scale was 7 (SD = 2, N= 88). Once again this is a relatively low score indicating that the respondents did not believe that there when situations were violence against a woman was justified.
- People who witnessed their father hitting their mother scored higher than people who did not witness this.
- People with no college education score higher than people with a college education do.
- Gender, age, being hit as a child, and witnessing one's father being hit do not influence scores.
- Being an immigrant does not influence scores.

Perceived Lack of Alternatives for Battered Women

(Total score possible 4-24)

- The average score on this scale was 8 (SD =4, N=99). This is a low score, meaning that the respondents overall believe that women do have the right to divorce, leave a husband who hits her or that the husband should be arrested.

- People who witnessed their father hitting their mother scored higher than people who did not witness this.
- Men score higher than women meaning that men believe that there are fewer alternatives for battered women than women do.
- Education, age, being hit as a child, and witnessing your father being hit do not influence scores.
- Being an immigrant does not influence scores.

A focus group of 7 members of the Korean community was held to discuss these findings. Group members were asked to comment on the finding that 32% of the Korean survey participants said that they know a woman who is abused and 3% say they know a man who is abused. The reaction of the group members was mixed with equivalent numbers seeing these figures as high, low, or accurate. Those who thought the figures were high did not think that men are abused. Those who saw the figures as low felt that if emotional abuse were included, the figures would be higher. They felt that many incidents may not be reported due to fear or a general lack of knowledge about what family violence is. For example, many women may not consider emotional or verbal abuse or financial control as a form of domestic violence.

In response to the high rate of corporal punishment, all participants agreed that it is the norm in most Korean homes. They distinguished discipline from abuse, recognizing that there is a fine line between the two. Possibly, a child may think a certain punishment is abusive, but may regard it as nurturing in later years.

When asked if there were any cultural factors that contribute to family violence in the Korean community, group members suggested that in many cases, Korean men and women experience a feeling of powerlessness because they are immigrants. As a result, they exert power in their home, taking out their frustration on someone who has even less power.

They also pointed out that Buddhism and Confucianism are important elements in Korean culture. This religious background emphasizes the “life cycle” where men are the rulers of the family, receiving more privilege in the cycle. Women generally receive less education and are more

socially deprived. When a Korean woman gets married, she “belongs” to her husband. Many Korean women are financially dependent on their husband and his family because in Korean families, men are breadwinners and women are mothers who raise and care for the children at home. When choosing a wife, Korean men look for women who know how to cook and keep house. It is shameful for a married woman to return to her own home, no matter what happens. Group members felt that a Korean woman living with violence would remain silent, not letting other people know and not wanting

When asked if there are any cultural factors that contribute to family violence in the Korean community, group members suggested that in many cases, Korean men and women experience a feeling of powerlessness because there are immigrants. As a result, they exert power in their home, taking out their frustration on someone who has even less power.

others to look down on her. To prevent shame to the family, she will try to solve problems by herself and not to let out the “family secret.” She may believe that the violence is a consequence of something she did wrong. She takes on the responsibility and blames herself.

Focus group members felt that some of the reasons why Korean women do not use services include shame, fear of revenge from the husband and his family, and fear of complicated legal procedures. They pointed out that the Korean government is known for its corruption. As a result many immigrants from Korea do not trust any legal system, including that of the U.S. The focus group noted that lawyers and police are primarily male. Battered women may feel that they cannot win in the male-dominated system. Also, there is a strong negative

connotation associated with both divorce and “shelters.” Even in the shelter system there is bureaucracy. Perhaps some women may think it is easier to live with the abuser than to live in a shelter and struggle with the complex legal system. Korean women with children will be afraid of losing their children in a custody battle, and entering a shelter may put her in a more vulnerable position. Finally, Buddhist, Confucian, and Christian teachings emphasize tolerance. Many women hope that their marriages will be better one day. Many Korean women believe that they must have done something wrong in their past life to deserve punishment in this life.

Recommendations

Overall, survey results of Korean respondents reflect attitudes that generally support options to end family violence rather than attitudes that accept and support family violence. Yet family violence remains pervasive as 32% of people reported knowing someone who is being abused. Men are more likely to hold attitudes supporting male privilege than women are. Although respondents also seem to support the victim’s choice to leave or divorce, they do not include turning to social service and law enforcement professionals for help. The message is that family violence is wrong—it should end; however, resources for help should remain private—family, friends, or keeping it to oneself. Korean respondents were unlikely to suggest the use of support services. The focus group felt that fatalist beliefs and a sense of shame might keep a victim from seeking help. Also, there is a strong sense of mistrust and fear of the police and the legal system, such as courts, and stigma associated with shelters.

Immigration status was not a factor in how participants view family violence. Responses to the survey were not influenced by whether the respondent is an immigrant or is U.S born. Assumptions that those born or who have lived in the United States longer would be less tolerant to family violence than recent immigrants is not supported by the data. Recent immigrants from Korea have similar attitudes about family violence as do U.S. born Korean-Americans.

While most respondents reported being hit as a child, this experience does not influence their attitudes about family violence. On the other hand, the

experience of witnessing one’s mother being hit by one’s father shows long lasting effects. Those who saw their mothers being hit are more likely to think that men have the right to discipline their wives. They are also more likely to think that using violence is justified in some situations. They are less likely to endorse options to end the abuse such as leaving the abuser, obtaining a divorce or arrest. Given that 32% of respondents know a woman who is being abused by her partner, this finding has alarming implications for the next generation.

In light of these findings, suggested approaches to addressing family violence in the Korean community include:

Increase outreach efforts:

- Incorporate religious and fatalist beliefs in tailoring outreach messages.
- Address the shame experienced by victims and their families.
- Incorporate the different beliefs that men and women have about male privilege.
- Recognize that domestic violence is a community wide problem and not restricted to recent immigrants with “traditional beliefs”.

Increase endorsement and utilization of social service and law enforcement networks:

- Educate about victims' rights and the role of the police and courts in order to de-mystify and assuage fears.
- Educate the community about services, address the shame, stigma and mistrust associated with services.
- Improve linguistic accessibility of services through hiring of bilingual staff and interpreters.

Investigate alternative models that support the family in providing options to family violence.

Increase the number and accessibility of child witness to domestic violence programs that address the long-term affects of witnessing family violence and that attempt to stop the cycle of violence.

The Vietnamese Community

Báo-cáo sự bạo-hành trong gia-đình



- 39% of Vietnamese surveyed know a woman who has been physically abused or injured by her partner
- 72% of the respondents were hit regularly by their parents when they were growing up
- 22% of the respondents know a man who is being beaten by his partner
- For help, Vietnamese respondents said a battered woman should turn to: police (49%), therapist (31%), shelter (29%), friend (29%). Telling family members (17%) ranks lower than turning to social service and law enforcement professionals.
- Vietnamese respondents overall believe that a man has the right to discipline his wife, can expect sex whenever he wants it, is the ruler of his home, or that wives deserve beatings.
- Vietnamese respondents overall believe that women do not have the right to divorce, leave a husband who hits her and/or that the husband should be arrested.

The U. S. Census estimates that there were 14,653 Vietnamese in Massachusetts in 1990. Vietnamese migration into Massachusetts has fallen into three distinct waves. The first wave, following the end of the Vietnam War, in 1975, was comprised primarily of US allied South Vietnamese. The second wave, spanning roughly 1977 – 1989, began the period of mass exodus of Vietnamese on fishing boats, earning them the name “boat people.” The third wave of refugees was comprised of former re-education camp detainees and the Amerasian children of American servicemen left behind by their fathers.

According to the Department of Public Health, most of the Vietnamese population reside in Dorchester, Brighton, East Boston, Malden, Somerville, Quincy, Worcester, Springfield, and Amherst/Northampton.

Responses of Vietnamese Survey Participants

The following is a summary of the survey responses of the Vietnamese participants.

Childhood Experiences

- 72% of the respondents were hit regularly by their parents when they were growing up.
- 15% saw their mothers regularly hit their fathers.
- 27% saw their fathers regularly hit their mothers.

Do you know a battered woman?

- 24% of the respondent say they know a woman whose partner keeps her from seeing her friends and family.
- 21% say they know a woman whose partner keeps her from going to work.
- 39% say they know a woman, who has been shoved, pushed, slapped, hit, kicked, or suffered other injuries by her partner.
- 43% say they know a woman whose partner insults or humiliates her regularly.

Do you know a battered man?

- 22% of the respondents say they know a man who is being beaten by his partner.

Attitudes Toward Wife Abuse

Male Privilege

(Total score possible 4-24)

- The average score on this scale was 12 (SD = 6, N= 65). This is a moderate score indicating that overall respondents believe that a man has the right to discipline his wife, can expect sex

whenever he wants it, is the ruler of his home, or that wives deserve beatings.

- Men score higher than women meaning that men hold attitudes of male privilege more than women do.
- People who witnessed either of their parents hitting each other had higher scores than those who did not witness this.
- Age, education, or being hit as a child did not affect scores.
- Because so many people were immigrants, the importance of immigration status on scores could not be tested.

Situational Approval of Violence

(Total score possible 6-24)

- The average score on this scale was 10 (SD = 5, N= 57). This is a relatively low score indicating that the respondents did not believe that there were situations when violence against a woman was justified.
- College educated people score much lower than people with no college education.
- Age does not influence scores.
- Men and women score just about the same.
- Childhood exposure to domestic violence or being hit as a child did not affect scores.

Perceived Lack of Alternatives for Battered Women

(Total score possible 4-24)

- The average score on this scale was 11 (SD = 5, N=60). This is a relatively high score which means that the respondents overall believe that

women do not have the right to divorce, leave a husband who hits her and/or that the husband should be arrested.

- People who were hit as a child by their parents score lower than people who were not hit.
- Older people score higher than younger people.
- Neither education, nor gender influences scores.
- Seeing one's mother hit one's father does not influence scores.

A focus group of 6 Vietnamese community members was held to discuss these findings. A notable theme across their responses was the importance economic power. In many cases, group members felt that because men were more likely to be able to find work, they had more power than their wives who were left financially dependent. For example, the group members were asked to comment on the finding that 49% of the survey participants said that they knew a battered Vietnamese woman. The group members felt that this figure was accurate. They observed that many Vietnamese wives are isolated because they do not speak English. Consequently, it is difficult for them to get a job. They are left with few opportunities to get out of the house. Their husbands on the other hand are more likely to be working, earning money and socializing outside of the home. His access to this public aspect of life gives him power over her.

Group members were also told that 22% of the survey participants said that they knew a man who is abused. Focus group participants thought that the number of people who knew a physically abused man is too high, but that if the number were to include emotional abuse, it may be somewhat higher. They felt that men would be ridiculed if they disclosed abuse to others. Group members observed that the dynamics between Vietnamese couples may be somewhat different from American couples. They felt that there was more equity between American couples. American women have economic power because they work and make money. They also have more personal power as evidenced by the fact that they verbally abuse men.

When told that 27% of the survey participants saw their fathers hit their mothers and 13% saw their mothers hit their fathers, the group members said that these figures were low. They saw the father as the leader who supports the family and thus has the right to 'teach' his wife, control her and abuse her. Women do

not speak up against their husbands because they are afraid that their husbands will leave. They do not want outside intervention because they do not want to risk the possibility that their husbands could get deported. Despite the violence, it was believed that many husbands are aware that they need their wives.

In terms of cultural values that may facilitate family violence, group members reiterated that men are the leaders of their home. They repeated a saying, "Educate a child from the time he/she is a little child. Educate a wife from the time she is a new bride."

Group members were told that 72% of the Vietnamese men and women reported being hit by their parents when they were growing up. The group members thought this figure was low and that a more accurate estimate would be closer to 90-95%. They added that hitting a child is normative. Parents, aunts, uncles, siblings, and teachers may all hit a child in order to get him/her to behave in a desired way. Hitting was distinct from abuse which was defined as ruthless, brutal, or done for no reason. Discipline on the other hand is reasonable and stops as the child ages.

In terms of cultural values that may facilitate family violence, group members reiterated that men are the leaders of their home. They have the right to treat their wives as they wish. If they hit her, other family members should not interfere. They repeated a saying, "Educate a child from the time he/she is a little child. Educate a wife from the time she is a new bride."

Finally, in terms of why many Vietnamese women do not receive help, group members underscored the importance of privacy. Women do not want to lose face or have others believe that she is not a good wife. Women are more likely to turn to a family member or a close friend.

A Focus Group Study at Dorchester Health Center

In a separate study, a total of 3 focus groups were held with Vietnamese female patients from a Dorchester Health Center in the Spring of 1999. The purpose of this study was to investigate the desirability of screening for family violence among Vietnamese patients at a health facility and to identify factors that may influence such a screening. It was carried out jointly by the staff at the Health Center and The Asian Task Force Against Domestic Violence and the in a collaborative initiative.

The participants ranged in age from 18-55 years. The groups were organized by age. The following is a summary of the focus group responses to a series of 6 questions posed to each group.

The women strongly supported the idea that all patients at health care facilities should be screened for family violence because many women were afraid to initiate the topic. Health care facilities play key support roles in women's life and are non threatening locations. This makes them an ideal choice in identifying women who need assistance. They described the violence as a 'core' problem impacting both physical and their mental health. Women felt most comfortable disclosing family violence when there was a trusting relationship. They stated that trust was build through continuity of care. Because of the lack of language facility in many locations, the woman's relationship with the interpreter is often a critical factor in her decision to disclose abuse. Overall, women preferred female interpreters and assurances of confidentiality were

paramount. When the screening should occur and the directness with which questions are asked varied by the age of the patient. Older women preferred a more indirect questioning format after a few visits giving the woman an opportunity to build a relationship with the physician and interpreter. Younger women preferred more direct questions and did not feel that delaying the screening was as important. If abuse is suspected, the physician should screen immediately.

Based on these focus groups, the following recommendations were made:

- There should be routine screenings for family violence at health facilities. Older women should be screened in later visits with more indirect phrasing. Younger women may be screened with direct questioning as early as possible
- Increase opportunities to build trusting relationships through increasing continuity of care by health care providers as well as interpreters. The same interpreter should be scheduled for follow-up visits.
- Is it critical that female interpreters be used especially if there is any suspicion of family violence
- Health care staff require substantive training on issues of family violence, and family violence reporting and confidentiality
- Assure Vietnamese patients of their rights of confidentiality and policy of confidentiality for staff

Recommendations

Overall, the Vietnamese respondents to this survey hold attitudes supportive of family violence. They believe that men have the right to discipline their wives, do not support the option of abused women to leave or divorce, and do not think that the abuser should be arrested. Men tend to believe in male privilege more than women, and older people are less supportive of the options to leave or divorce than younger people.

Given the attitudes about family violence, it is understandable that it is a pervasive problem. A large number of respondents reported knowing a woman (39%) or a man (22%) who is physically abused by a partner. Despite knowing both men and women who are abused, the survey responses reflect attitudes in support of the use of violence by a man on his wife, not by a woman on her husband. Clearly, a double standard exists as to who should have the right to use violence. The respondents also did not think that leaving an abuser or arrest are

acceptable options for battered women. The message is that men have the right to abuse and that women should learn to live with it.

Perhaps the respondents would be supportive of more family centered options to address family violence since many thought that battered women should seek help from professionals. Vietnamese respondents recommended that a battered woman should turn to the police (49%) a therapist (31%), a hotline (22%) or various community agencies (17-18%). She should also turn to friends (29%) or family members (17%). Vietnamese respondents suggested that a battered woman should turn to professionals for help equal to or more than they suggested turning to family members for help. Focus group participants did not think this would bear out in reality because of the shame associated with seeking help. Even so, the high number of people who suggested turning to helping professionals indicates a potential and critical role that these services can play.

Witnessing a parent being hit had lasting effects on attitudes. As adults, child witnesses are more likely to believe that men have the right to discipline their wives. 27% of people saw their fathers hit their mothers and 15% saw their mothers hit their fathers. Since many people grew up in homes where they witnessed violence, this has wide reaching implications for the next generation. There is hope in that the respondents who personally experienced being hit as children are more likely to support options to end family violence.

In light of these findings, suggested approaches to addressing family violence in the Vietnamese community include:

Increase outreach efforts:

- Address attitudes supportive of male privilege in outreach messages. Incorporate the different beliefs that men and women have about male privilege.
- Address the attitude that women should live with abuse.
- Address the shame experienced by victims and their families in seeking help.

Increase utilization of social service and law enforcement networks:

- Educate the community about services; address the shame, stigma and mistrust associated with services.
- Improve linguistic accessibility of services through hiring of bilingual staff and interpreters.
- Educate social service providers about domestic violence and cultural sensitivity in order to increase awareness, sensitivity and response to family violence.

Address the high rate of corporal punishment:

- Increase parent education programs that teach about the laws in the U.S., the rights of children and parents, and alternative models of discipline.
- Increase parental support systems such as childcare.

Investigate alternative models that support the family in providing options to family violence.

Increase the number and accessibility of child witness to domestic violence programs that address the long-term affects of witnessing family violence and that attempt to stop the cycle of violence.



The Cambodian Community

របៀបការណ៍នៃអំពើហិង្សាក្នុងគ្រួសារ



- 47% of Cambodians surveyed know a woman who has been physically abused or injured by her partner
- 70% of Cambodians surveyed were hit regularly by their parents when they were growing up
- 37% of the respondents know a man who is being beaten by his partner
- For help, Cambodians stated that a battered woman should turn to: police (47%), friends (44%), family members (23%), hotline (22%). 22% of respondents said the woman shouldn't tell anyone.
- Cambodian respondents overall do not believe that women have the right to divorce, leave a husband who hits her, or that the husband should be arrested.
- Focus group members felt that the genocide has made many people vulnerable to stress and depression, which may play a role in domestic violence.

Cambodians started immigrating to the United States in significant numbers in the early 1980's, fleeing the genocide of the Pol Pot regime (1975-1979) and the Vietnamese supported government that unseated Pol Pot. They were resettled initially in many of the urban areas in Massachusetts. By 1990, the U.S. Census documented 13,849 Cambodians in Massachusetts.

In the mid-1980's, many Cambodians started moving to Lowell, drawn by available factory jobs and affordable rents. In 1985 the Cambodian community established a Buddhist temple in Lowell, which has served as a magnet for the Cambodian population. This community has continued to grow through both secondary migration and new immigration. Lowell is now home to the second largest Cambodian community in the U.S. According to Mailan Thong of Khmer Television, the current estimate of the Southeast Asian population in greater Lowell, the majority of which is Cambodian, is 35,000 -- close to 33% of Lowell's population. The Massachusetts Department of Public Health reports that other Cambodian communities are located in Chelsea, Revere, Lynn, Lawrence, Attleboro/Fall River, Fitchburg, Holden, Leominster, Shrewsbury, Worcester, Springfield, Amherst, and Boston.

Responses of Cambodian Survey Participants

The following is a summary of the survey responses of the Cambodian participants.

Childhood Experiences

- 70% of the respondents were hit regularly by their parents when they were growing up.
- 28% saw their mothers regularly hit their fathers.
- 28% saw their fathers regularly hit their mothers.

Do you know a battered woman?

- 44% of the respondents say they know a woman whose partner keeps her from seeing her friends and family.
- 44% say they know a woman whose partner keeps her from going to work.
- 47% say they know a woman who has been shoved, pushed, slapped, hit, kicked, or has suffered other injuries by her partner.
- 44% say they know a woman whose partner insults or humiliates her regularly.

Do you know a battered man?

- 37% of the respondents say they know a man who is being beaten by his partner.

Attitudes toward Wife Abuse

Male Privilege

(Total score possible 4-24)

- The average score on this scale was 9 (SD = 4, N= 61). This is a relatively low score, indicating that overall respondents do not believe that a man has the right to discipline his wife, can expect sex whenever he wants it, is the ruler of his home, or that wives deserve beatings.
- Men score higher than women meaning that men hold attitudes of male privilege more than women do.
- People who witnessed one parent (either mother or father) hit the other had higher scores than those who never witnessed this.
- Education, age, and being hit as a child did not influence scores.
- Because so many people were immigrants, we could not test the importance of immigration status on scores.

Situational Approval of Violence

(Total score possible 6-24)

- The average score on this scale was 10 (SD = 5, N= 59). This is a relatively low score indicating that the respondents did not believe that there were situations where violence against a woman was justified.
- Gender, education, age and childhood experience do not influence scores.

Perceived Lack of Alternatives for Battered Women

(Total score possible 4-24)

- The average score on this scale was 12 (SD =6, N=63). This is a relatively high score, which means that the respondents overall do not believe that women have the right to divorce, leave a husband who hits her, or that the husband should be arrested.
- Older people score higher than younger people do.
- Gender, education, or childhood experiences do not influence scores.

A focus group of 6 members of the Cambodian community was held to discuss the findings of the survey. The group expressed an important concern that the survey data might be misused to portray the Cambodian community negatively. They pointed out that common stereotypes of Cambodians as violent people or as gang members misrepresent the community. They expressed the hope that the survey findings could be used in a positive way.

The group members were told that 28% of the survey sample said that they witnessed violence between their parents. Group members felt that this figure was too high. They acknowledged that when women hit men, it is never as serious as when a man hits a woman. When asked where the line lies between child discipline and abuse, focus group members commented that corporal punishment is very common and severe among Cambodian families. Child discipline is defined in terms of the parent being in control of his or her emotions and teaching the child correct behavior. Abuse is different in terms of severity. It is punishment that is too severe for the misbehavior. The parent is likely out of control and the child does not understand what he or she has done wrong.

In terms of cultural factors that may contribute to family violence, the group members felt that in Cambodian culture, men are dominant and wives are regarded as property. Parents perpetuate these values when they educate their sons to think and act in this manner. When people learn of an abusive situation, they are apt to believe that the woman deserved it and will blame the woman for breaking up the family. The group members commented that in the United States, more Cambodian women are employed. They also can seek domestic violence services and there are laws to protect them. In

Cambodia, however, women are not aware of their rights. Women have few options because they are economically dependent on men. When asked to comment on the 44-47% of survey respondents who said they knew a battered woman and the 37% who said they knew a battered man, the group members said that Cambodian men in the United

When asked to comment on the 44–47% of survey respondents who said they knew a battered woman and the 37% who said they knew a battered man, the group members commented that post traumatic stress disorder may play a role. Surviving the genocide has left people more vulnerable to stress and depression which may contribute to domestic violence.

States have much less power and control over their families than they do in Cambodia. Men feel that they have lost power and control because their value as the head of household is diminished as a result of their wives and children's employment. They also commented that post traumatic stress disorder may play a role. Surviving the genocide has left people more vulnerable to stress and depression which may contribute to domestic violence.

Finally, the group members commented on the barriers that battered women face when trying to access help. Group members felt that Cambodians would not call agencies for help to protect their reputations in the community. Family problems are shameful. The cost of turning to the police for help, for example, may be too high. People are more likely to turn to family and friends, perhaps the temple, or just keep it to themselves. Even though women work, they are still dependent on their husbands for financial support. If they use formal services, they may be afraid that their children will not have a father. There is a strong stigma against divorce which will result in blame and shame in the community.

Recommendations

The answers to the survey questions indicate that, overall, Cambodian respondents had attitudes that are intolerant of domestic violence. They generally did not hold the opinion that male privilege is a right, nor that there are situations in which violence against a woman is justified. In addition, a large number of people reported knowing about family violence in their community. A full 47% knew a woman who is being abused.

Cambodian respondents nonetheless did not endorse leaving an abuser or obtaining a divorce as viable ways to address the violence. While 47% said a battered woman should call the police for help, Cambodian respondents did not think that arrest is an acceptable response. In fact, 22% of respondents thought that the woman shouldn't tell anyone about the abuse.

Despite awareness of the problem of family violence and a belief that violence is unacceptable, common alternatives to violence are not accepted by this community. The community knows that violence is wrong but doesn't approve of the means of ending violence. This sends a mixed message to victims. The focus group cited blame and shame as major factors that impede help seeking behavior.

In light of these findings, suggested approaches to family violence in the Cambodian community are:

Increase outreach efforts:

- to address the shame that prevents victims from seeking help
- to address the contradiction in the community's attitude that family violence is a problem but that doesn't accept a victim's choice to leave or arrest by police
- to address the different attitudes that men and women hold with regard to male privilege, and to develop strategies to educate the younger generation.

Increase alternatives for victims and families:

- Increase the numbers of services that support the family but do not excuse the violence. Examples expressed through the focus group include economic alternatives for victims, batterers' intervention programs, and mental health services.
- Increase bilingual staffing and translation services, so that the community can access existing services.
- Educate community service providers about family violence and ways to address the shame and blame.

Address the high rate of corporal punishment of children:

- Educate parents about the difference between discipline and abuse, about the laws in the U.S. and about alternative methods of discipline.
- Increase parental support systems such as child care and parenting groups.

The South Asian Community

परिवार हिंसा

विवरण



- 44% of South Asians surveyed know a woman who has been physically abused or injured by her partner
- 79% of the respondents were hit regularly by their parents when they were growing up
- 5% of the respondents know a man who is being beaten by his partner
- South Asian respondents endorsed help seeking more than any other Asian group surveyed. 82% said that a battered woman should tell a friend, call the police (74%), tell a family member (66%), turn to a shelter (50%) or therapist (48%). Only 5% said the woman shouldn't tell anyone.
- Focus group members felt that the woman in marriage becomes the property of her husband and no longer belongs to her parents. A woman can not turn to her own family for help once she is married and parents are not supposed to intervene in the daughter's marriage.
- Focus Group felt that in-laws play a critical role in 'family violence' within South Asian families especially in cases of dowry disputes.

The South Asian communities in Massachusetts directly immigrated or can trace their heritage back to India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Maldives, Nepal, and Bhutan. The largest of these countries is India, which accounts for the biggest proportion of the South Asian population in Massachusetts.

According to the India Abroad Center for Political Awareness, three distinct waves of immigration occurred from South Asia to the United States. The earliest wave of Indian migration was comprised of indentured servants. The second wave in the late 19th century were poor laborers drawn by the promise of jobs in the developing west. Thereafter, anti-Asian immigration laws banned more numbers from coming to the U.S. until the repeal of these laws in 1966 allowed for a steady third wave of immigrants from mostly academic and professional backgrounds.

The 1990 census documents 18,885 Asian Indians residing in Massachusetts. The number of other South Asian communities is not specified in the census data. The Massachusetts Department of Public Health reports that the largest concentration of South Asians reside in Boston, Cambridge, Somerville, Framingham, Waltham, Worcester, Brookline, Newton, Amherst, and Springfield.

Responses of South Asian Survey Participants

The following is a summary of their responses to the survey.

Childhood Experiences

- 79% of the respondents were hit regularly by their parents when they were growing up.
- 5% saw their mothers regularly hit their fathers.
- 8% saw their fathers regularly hit their mothers.

Do you know a battered woman?

- 28% of the respondent say they know a woman whose partner keeps her from seeing her friends and family.
- 23% say they know a woman whose partner keeps her from going to work.
- 44% say they know a woman, who has been shoved, pushed, slapped, hit, kicked, or suffered other injuries by her partner.
- 31% say they know a woman whose partner insults or humiliates her regularly.

Do you know a battered man?

- 5% of the respondents say they know a man who is being beaten by his partner.

Attitudes toward Wife Abuse Male Privilege

(Total score possible 4-24)

- The average score on this scale was 7 (SD = 3, N= 53). This is a low score indicating that respondents do not believe that a man has the right to discipline his wife, can expect sex whenever he wants it, is the ruler of his home, or that wives deserve beatings.
- Older people score higher than younger people.
- Gender, education, childhood experiences, and whether one is an immigrant do not influence scores.

Situational Approval of Violence

(Total score possible 6-24)

- The average score on this scale was 7 (SD = 3, N= 58). This is a low score indicating that the respondents do not believe that there are situations when violence against a woman is justified.
- Men score higher than women, meaning that men are more likely than women to support the use of violence in some specific situations.
- Older people score higher than younger people.
- Education, childhood experience, and whether one is an immigrant do not influence scores.

Perceived Lack of Alternatives for Battered Women

(Total score possible 4-24)

- The average score on this scale was 8 (SD=4, N=50). This is a low score meaning that the respondents overall do not believe that women have the right to divorce, leave a husband who hits her, or that the husband should be arrested.
- People who were NOT hit as a child score higher than people who were hit as a child.
- Younger people score higher than older people.
- Gender, education, witnessing parental violence, or whether one is an immigrant do not influence scores.

A focus group of members of the South Asian community was held to discuss these findings. They were informed of the survey findings regarding the proportion of participants who said they know an abused woman and those who said they know an abused man. Group members felt the percentage of respondents who know an abused man (5%) was high and the percentage of respondents who know an abused woman (44%) was low. They defined family violence as hitting, abusing, and pushing. They pointed out that when the woman is defending herself, this should not be considered family violence on her part. They distinguished discipline from child abuse in terms of its purpose. Discipline

is action taken to correct a mistake made by a child. Abuse is excessive punishment and is a reaction to the punisher's own emotion.

In terms of cultural factors unique to South Asian family life that may contribute to family violence, group members felt that the male dominated society plays a role. Daughters in the South Asian culture are "given"; i.e. when they are married. They become the property of their husbands and no longer belong to their parents. A woman can not turn to her own family for help once she is married and parents are not supposed to intervene in the daughter's marriage. Women who leave an abusive home would experience tremendous stigma. Group members clarified that the practice of arranged marriage does not contribute to family violence but the view of women as property does. Finally, some group members wondered if being Muslim had an influence on family violence. They felt that that there is a difference in how Muslims and Hindus raise their children. Some participants thought that Hindu families have more freedom.

When asked why many South Asian women do not use formal services, group members identified stigma as the primary factor. Many women are financially dependent on their husbands, and using shelters or the law bring with them financial considerations and insecurity about life after divorce.

A Study by Dr. Anita Raj, Boston University

Dr. Raj examined the prevalence of family violence among South Asian women, identified the types of abuse that are perpetrated, and identified the types of help-seeking behavior battered South Asian women employ. A total of 160 South Asian women were interviewed, all of whom had been involved with a male partner in the previous year. The women were 18-62 years of age, 87.5% were immigrants, and 74.4% were married.

Dr. Raj found that 19% of all the women had witnessed physical violence between their parents while growing up and 40% had witnessed emotional abuse. Seventeen percent of the sample felt that

some women deserved abuse, and 4% felt that they sometimes deserved to be abused. In total, 40% of all the women had experienced physical or sexual abuse in their current relationship. Of these women, 11% had sought out counseling and only half of these women knew how to obtain services for domestic violence. From these findings, Dr. Raj concludes that family violence is a serious and prevalent concern within the South Asian community, however, the availability and accessibility of services is limited. She argues strongly for the development of culturally tailored counseling and education programs for South Asian women.

A Needs Assessment

In the summer of 1999, the Massachusetts Asian AIDS Prevention Project together with the Asian Task Force Against Domestic Violence conducted an assessment of the beliefs, experiences, and knowledge of services of the South Asian community. This information was used for service planning and delivery.

Sixty-five questionnaires were completed by South Asian community members. In addition, 2 focus groups were held, comprised of 5 women each. The respondents to the questionnaire were predominantly Indian (95%) and well educated. Approximately the same number of men and women participated.

The majority of people believed that a man does not have the right to discipline his wife and more than half believed that a man should be arrested if he hits his wife. Approximately 90% of the respondents believed that a wife does not ask for beatings from their husband. Overall, these respondents did not hold attitudes supporting marital violence.

In contrast, one-third of the respondents knew a South Asian woman who is regularly insulted or humiliated by her partner or spouse. Also, 29% knew a woman who has experienced being physically restrained, shoved, pushed, slapped, hit, kicked or suffered other physical injuries by her husband or boyfriend.

The discussion of the focus group pointed to undeniable experiences of family violence but an unwillingness to discuss issues of violence with the

Recommendations

Overall, South Asian respondents were intolerant to domestic violence. Generally, the respondents did not support male privilege, did not justify using violence against a woman in any situation, and support leaving the abuser, divorce and arrest as options to domestic violence. Many respondents were familiar with abuse and 44% report knowing a woman who has been shoved, slapped, or kicked by her partner. Also, many of the respondents were

larger South Asian community due to shame and honoring family and community. Group members stated that “family violence” is not always seen as a violence problem but one of discipline and family honor. They pointed to the patriarchal structure of South Asian families where the husband is “God”

Group members stated that “family violence” was not always seen as a violence problem but one of discipline and family honor. They also felt that in-laws play a critical role in “family violence” within South Asian families especially in cases of dowry disputes.

and the wife must respect him. Group members also felt that in-laws play a critical role in “family violence” within South Asian families especially in cases of dowry disputes.

Group members felt that there was no opportunity to discuss issues of violence because of the shame that would fall on families. Divorce is always seen as the woman's fault. Women are pressured to keep up “community appearances” and felt that there are generally high expectations for them to keep silent about family problems.

themselves hit by their parents when they were growing up. Clearly, despite holding attitudes that are intolerant to family violence, it is still a pervasive problem.

Several differences emerged within this sample of South Asian respondents. Age was a consistent factor that contributed to differences in attitudes. Older people tended to believe that men are the rulers of

their homes and that the use of violence against a woman is justifiable in certain situations. However, when there is violence, options such as leaving, divorce and arrest are acceptable alternatives for battered women. On the other hand, younger respondents tended to believe that male privilege is wrong and violence can not be justified. However, younger respondents believed that when a woman is battered, she should not leave and the abuser should not be arrested. Gender was another factor that contributed to a difference in attitudes. Men were more likely than women to think that the use of violence is acceptable in certain domestic disputes. Finally, the South Asian respondents who were hit as children were more likely to support the options of leaving, divorce and arrest than those who were not hit as children. This is in contrast to other studies that indicate people who were hit as children tend to condone the use of violence.

Immigration was not a factor in the respondents' attitudes towards family violence. People who were born in the U.S. gave similar responses to people who immigrated. This study did not support the popular notion that recent immigrants are more likely to have "traditional" values that condone family violence.

Survey results by South Asian respondents suggested that a battered woman should turn to her circle of friends (82%) and family members (66%) for help. A high percentage of respondents also suggested seeking the help of the police (74%), a shelter (50%), a therapist (48%) and other helping professionals. Very few people thought that the woman should keep the problem to herself. Contrary to these findings from the survey, participants in the focus group indicated that an abused woman's

behavior might be very different. Focus group participants reported that the stigma associated with leaving and shame are major reasons why women do not seek help. Also, they thought that concerns about money and life after divorce would prevent many abused women from seeking help.

In light of these findings, suggested approaches to addressing family violence in the South Asian community include:

Increase outreach efforts:

- Address the shame that victims feel and the stigma of seeking help.
- Incorporate the different beliefs that men and women have about male privilege.
- Recognize that domestic violence is a community wide problem and not restricted to recent immigrants with "traditional beliefs".
- Design outreach strategies that incorporate the intergenerational differences in beliefs about family violence.

Increase endorsement and utilization of social service and law enforcement networks:

- Educate the community about services. Address the shame and stigma associated with services.
- Improve linguistic accessibility of services through hiring of bilingual staff and interpreters.

Increase the number and accessibility of child witness to domestic violence programs that address the long-term affects of witnessing family violence and that attempt to stop the cycle of violence.

Implications

This report is one of the first of its kind. Although there has been a tremendous amount of research on the topic of family violence, almost none of it has included the experiences of Asian men and women. Information such as this is vital to intelligent service planning, community education and outreach planning, and community and victim advocacy. It is essential that we understand the attitudes and experiences of our communities so that we can articulate them to funders and policy setters ensuring a sensitive and effective response. If we fail in this task, then Asian communities will remain without a voice.

This report has examined the available research address family violence in Asian communities in the Massachusetts area. From the studies reported here, there are nine important implications for family violence service and policy. They are:

- 1. Address the high rate of family violence in the Asian communities. Don't hide behind the excuse of being cultural different*
- 2. Acknowledge the uniqueness of the Asian communities and our similarities*
- 3. Address the high rates of corporal punishment in Asian families*
- 4. Address the tension between western feminist model of services that promotes independence for women with Asian values of patriarchy, hierarchy, and inter-dependence*
- 5. Educate our community members about family violence to address the shame that prevents men and women from getting the assistance they need*
- 6. Broaden the services offered to battered women*
- 7. Improve accessibility to services by fostering cultural sensitivity*
- 8. Educate funders and legislators about family violence in the Asian community, making it a priority in funding programs,*
- 9. Promote research on family violence in Asian communities*

Address the high rate of family violence in the Asian communities. Don't hide behind the excuse of being culturally different

An astounding 25-33% of the entire sample reported knowing a woman who met at least one criteria of abuse. Within the individual communities, this figure ranged from a minimum of 21% in the Vietnamese community to a high of 47% in the Cambodian community. In every case, the members of the focus group felt that these figures were low. Additionally, 12% of the entire sample said they knew a man who was abused. This ranged from 3% in the Korean community to 37% in the Cambodian community. In all cases but in the South Asian community, focus group members felt these numbers were low as well. Issues of privacy and shame make it exceedingly difficult to get accurate prevalence rates. Until this research is conducted, this is our best indicator that family violence is a serious and under recognized problem. It is imperative that we acknowledge the scope and seriousness of this problem. In order to do this, we can not hide behind cultural excuses such as 'Asian families are patriarchal, therefore some violence is inevitable'. We must honor rich and beautiful tradition but be vehemently opposed to any behavior that oppresses. Asian traditions command strength not abuse. Addressing family violence must become a priority.

Acknowledge the uniqueness of Asian communities and our similarities

One of the very important truths underscored by this research is the diversity of the Asian communities. As Asians, we have common ties around themes of the importance of family, respect for hierarchy, and the value of harmonious relations. We also have important differences. Some of these differences may have roots in our immigration histories to the United States whether we entered the country as refugees, professionals, or skilled laborers. Much of these differences stem from cultural variations that manifest in our different religions, languages, foods, and customs. As a political group, we need to stand together to advocate for all Asian communities. Our strength lies in unity. In our family

services, we need to acknowledge our differences. It Addressing family violence within the Asian communities is a complex task because of these differences. Complicating factors include immigration status, acculturation level, language differences, communication preferences, help-seeking preferences, issues of privacy and shame and preferences for traditional family structures. The findings of this report can help us to articulate the variations in our attitudes and beliefs. Overall, the members of the Southeast Asian communities who participated in the research espoused more traditional beliefs about male privilege in contrast to the other groups. The Chinese and South Asian men and women supported male privilege the least. Understanding these kinds of differences allows us to better shape service and education programs to meet the needs of different Asian communities

Address the high rates of corporal punishment in Asian families

The figures from the survey suggest that the experience of corporal punishment is the norm among the Asian men and women in the sample. It should be noted that there is a clear distinction between ‘being hit as a child’ and abuse. This study asked about corporal punishment and does not inform us about abusive behavior. Further, being hit as a child is not uniformly linked to attitudes supporting family violence. Within the Chinese community, men and women who were hit regularly held patriarchal attitudes more strongly than men and women who were not. However, within the Cambodian community, men and women who were hit regularly perceived that battered women had more alternatives to putting up with the abuse available to them than men and women who were not hit regularly. For all other communities, corporal punishment was unrelated to attitudes of family violence once all other factors were taken into account.

While parents should have the right to raise their children in keeping with their values and to the best of their ability, there is research to suggest that corporal punishment is linked to behavior problems in children (Brenner & Fox, 1998; Flynn, 1999) and depression and violent behavior in adults (Straus, 1995; Straus & Mouradian, 1998). Thus, our communities must question the widespread use of corporal punishment among Asian families. Family and community based organizations serving Asian families must begin to assist families to develop non-violent discipline alternatives .

Address the tension between western feminist model of services that promotes independence for women with Asian values of patriarchy, hierarchy, and inter-dependence.

One of the biggest and most important challenges to addressing family violence within Asian communities is reconciling the differences between feminist models of family violence and Asian preferences for hierarchy. Advocacy for battered women stems from a firm belief in a woman’s right to control her own body, mind, and destiny. It is a belief that a woman has the right to choose what is best for herself and her needs and desires should be regarded as equal in importance to a man’s. This belief does not hold that men should be put down but that women’s worth should be raised.

One of the biggest and most important challenges to addressing family violence within Asian communities is reconciling the differences between feminist models of family violence and Asian preferences for hierarchy.

Based on these beliefs, family violence services in Massachusetts and the United States have been developed. In this ‘mainstream’ family violence service arena, divorce and independence from an abusive home and use of restraining orders are common actions taken to protect women. Massachusetts has adopted a mandatory arrest law whereby the police must arrest an abusive husband when they are handling a family violence case taking the decision from the hands of the wife. These responses have protected thousands of women and helped them to live lives free of abuse. For most battered Asian women however, these options are fraught with difficulty. Separation and divorce are highly stigmatized and for immigrant women in particular living independently from their husbands may only isolate them from extended family and community. Immigrant women may be reluctant to use legal enforcement because of their own

precarious immigration status or because of well-earned mistrust. Most Asian women want to find ways to keep their families together and end the abuse. Most family violence services however are not designed for this purpose.

Finding answers to this dilemma lays with the Asian communities. We are responsible for educating ourselves about women's rights and how we fit them into strong, unified families. We are also responsible for developing new kinds of family violence services that acknowledge Asian values. 'Mainstream' social services providers are not going to provide these kinds of services for us. We need to be the leaders in this area.

Educate our community members about family violence to address the shame that prevents men and women from getting the assistance they need

As collectivist societies, shame is an important concept that promotes group values over individual desires (Kim & Nam, 1998; Kirkbride, Tany & Westwood, 1991). As a core value, men and women implicitly consider the impact of their behavior on others and use this information to shape their own actions (Sato, 1979). Shame facilitates harmony and inter-dependence. However, shame also presents a sizable barrier to reaching out for help when it is needed. It is commonly cited as a primary obstacle to disclosure of difficult family circumstances and receipt of services among Asians (Erickson D'Avanzo, 1997; Okazaki, 2000; Panganamala, 1999).

In the findings of this report, women's feelings of shame and desire to protect family and community honor were commonly identified reasons why family violence is not disclosed and help is neither asked for nor received. Likely, feelings of shame will be more strongly pronounced for men who are living with violence. As communities, it is imperative that we find ways to make assistance accessible while protecting family honor. We need to educate ourselves, our families, and our communities about family violence to help dispel the myths that surround it such as a) it doesn't happen in Asian families, b) women deserve to be abuse, or c) there are no alternatives for battered women but to live with the violence.

Broaden the services offered to battered women

From survey and the focus groups, women told us of the difficulty they experienced adjusting to American life. Themes of isolation and feelings of confusion when dealing with their environment were consistent across ethnic groups. Based on this information, it is important that services to battered Asian women must include more than assistance with restraining orders. First, much more active outreach needs to be extended to women in their communities. Women who can not work because of their lack of English or because are being isolated

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by abusive men need services to be extended to them where they live. Second, women need assistance with survival skills such as ESL training, orientation to American culture, law enforcement, child protection services. They need to be accompanied to social service agencies and/or other facilities in order to ensure they receive the services they need, reduce stress, and to build confidence. This is not creating dependency. This is lending support and empowering.

Improve accessibility to services by fostering cultural sensitivity

One clear message from this report is that mainstream social service providers need assistance in understanding what constitutes culturally sensitive practice with Asian battered women. From the survey and discussion groups, the participants told us that there are three important changes that must be made:

1. Whether it is in health care settings, family violence agencies, or police departments, it is imperative that battered women have a chance to receive help in their first language. It is impossible for a woman to express complex emotions or provide detailed personal histories when she does not have language facility. The assistance a battered woman receives should not be compromised because of the provider's inability to speak her language. To increase language accessibility, it is important that written materials are translated into multiple Asian languages and that the numbers of helping personnel with Asian language facility be increased.
2. Service providers must be educated about the necessity of using indirect lines of questioning and assessment when working with Asian battered women. Asian societies utilize a high-context communication style (Hall, 1977), this means that the spoken words are only a part of what one pays attention to if he or she wants to understand what is being said. To accurately hear what is being said, the listener must pay attention to the speaker's non-verbal behavior and must have some knowledge of the person's behavior and other immediate interactions. It is what many people refer to as "reading between the lines". Because Asians use a high context style and communications may be slightly ambiguous to avoid offending others (Kim, 1985), direct lines of questioning may make Asian battered women uncomfortable. Service providers must be especially attentive to developing a trusting rapport with a battered Asian woman, being patient to allow her to tell her story at her own pace, and listening and watching carefully to understand what she is trying to communicate.
3. Along with social service providers, police departments and other law enforcement personnel need to be educated about family violence in the Asian community. They need to know that it exists and that there are institutional barriers (e.g., few Asian personnel) and cultural barriers (e.g., family honor) that make it difficult for Asian women to see law enforcement as a credible resource for them. It should also be made clear that past experiences with racism and discrimination may make some women reticent to use their services. For all battered women, dealing with the police and courts is an overwhelming and difficult process (Weisz, 1999). For an Asian immigrant woman, the task may be feel insurmountable unless the institution makes an effort to reach out.

Talk to funders and legislators about family violence in the Asian community, making it a priority in funding programs

If we do not undertake the task of educating legislators and funders about family violence in our communities, they will remain uninformed. Asians have been identified as the model minority because of our diligence, frugality, and willingness to sacrifice (Crystal, 1989). While many Asian families enjoy their hard-earned success, there are many other Asian families who require assistance. In order to break through the myth of the model minority, we need to persistently and clearly advocate for ourselves. Only by doing so will the needs of Asian communities be recognized and more importantly, will programs for Asian families be funded.

Promote research on family violence in Asian communities

Much more information about Asian family violence experiences needs to be gathered. There is a vast amount of research addressing family violence but only a very small proportion of it pertains to Asian families. This is particularly unsettling considering that an alarming 38% of the respondents said that they knew a woman who was being physically abused. We need prevalence studies to determine the scope and severity of the problem, we need to understand how social, personal, and cultural factors impede and/or facilitate the onset of violence, and we need to understand women's help-seeking patterns. By understanding our collective experiences, we can plan more intelligently outreach programs, and treatment and prevention services. We can better educate service providers, police departments, district attorneys, physicians, and teachers, and better advocate with legislators.

The issues of privacy and shame or past negative experiences that make people reluctant to seek services also make people reluctant to participate in research. But by keeping silent, we let the problem remain invisible. We need to develop a deep understanding of the problem of family violence within our communities so that we can formulate an informed response.

Summary

This report has presented the results of a large community survey of men and women from five Asian communities in Massachusetts. The purpose of the survey was to assess the extent to which Chinese, Korean, Vietnamese, Cambodian, and South Asian adults held attitudes supportive of family violence. In addition, the experience of corporal punishment, witnessing family violence as a child, and beliefs concerning help seeking for battered women were addressed.

The findings suggest that overall Asian men and women do not support family violence as their scores on an attitudinal measure were low. There were some notable differences and variations in the scores of these communities underscoring the fallacy of Asians as a monolithic group. The Southeast Asian participants tended to hold more strongly patriarchal attitudes than the remaining groups. Male privilege attitudes were influenced by educational level, immigration status, and whether or not one witnessed family violence as a child. In almost all cases, men of all ethnicities held more strongly attitudes supportive of family violence than women.

The findings show a surprisingly large number of adults who witnessed family violence as a child and an equally surprisingly number who were hit as children. Even more noteworthy than these figures

is that 38% of the respondents said that they knew a woman who has been shoved, pushed, slapped, hit, kicked, or suffered other injuries by her partner. This figure is alarming and should serve as a catalyst to identify prevalence rates of family violence within our communities and the development of outreach services.

In addition to these survey findings, the results of many focus group discussions some related to the survey and some not, were also presented. The outcomes of these rich discussions are invaluable to understanding the needs and wants of Asian battered women. Women identified a number of institutional and cultural barriers to obtaining assistance.

From these findings, nine implications were identified. These implications call us as community members to take responsibility for addressing family violence within our families – to take responsibility to learn more about it, to teach others what we have learned, to advocate for those who need help, and to open our heart to those who ask for it. Our strength lays in working together while acknowledging our differences to address family violence with our communities.

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