Relationship Violence in Five Los Angeles Asian American Communities

Intergenerational Risk and Strengthening Factors

October 2020

Asian Pacific Policy & Planning Council

Asian Pacific Policy and Planning Council is a coalition of more than forty community-based organizations that serve and represent the 1.5 million Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders in the greater Los Angeles area, with a particular focus on low-income, immigrant, refugee and other vulnerable populations.

SSG Research & Evaluation

The Special Service for Groups Research & Evaluation Team (SSG R&E) mission is to unlock the power of data to strengthen communities through research, training, and evaluation. SSG R&E seeks to build community capacity through a variety of services and trainings that are tailored to be responsive to local histories, cultures, and political contexts. Our primary areas of focus are: participatory action research, evaluation for social impact, and technical assistance/ capacity building for community-based organizations that share our commitment to social justice and equity.

Blue Shield of California Foundation

This report was developed through the generous support of the Blue Shield of California Foundation. The Blue Shield of California Foundation is a health care foundation with the mission to build lasting and equitable solutions that make California the healthiest state and end domestic violence. Its strategic areas of work include breaking the cycle of domestic violence, collaborating for healthy communities, and designing the future of health.

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Executive Summary

This study explores risk and protective factors in five Asian American communities: Cambodian, Chinese, Korean, North Indian Hindu, and Pakistani Muslim. These factors include cultural traditions, norms, attitudes and beliefs, particularly around gender roles, intergenerational family dynamics, intimate relationships, and approaches to child-rearing.

Eight organizations, including Asian Pacific Policy & Planning Council (A3PCON), Asian Pacific Counseling & Treatment Centers (APCTC), Center for the Pacific Asian Family (CPAF), Korean American Family Services (KFAM), Koreatown Youth & Community Center (KYCC), Pacific Asian Counseling Services (PACS), South Asian Network (SAN), and Special Service for Groups – Research & Evaluation (SSG R&E), partnered together to conduct this collaborative research project.

The specific goals of this study were *1) to provide insight into cultural dynamics surrounding intimate relationships and healthy relationships in Los Angeles County Asian American communities, and 2) to develop recommendations for how to approach the multi-layered issue of domestic violence within Asian American communities,* recognizing that this requires parallel approaches at different levels across different stakeholder groups to craft a complex solution for a complicated problem.

This study involved 23 semi-structured focus groups (163 total participants) to gather the perspectives of youth/young adults, parents, community leaders, and service providers in six different languages across the five communities.

This study suggests that the intergenerational immigrant experience has destabilized traditional family ecologies and has introduced stressful dynamics. This family disharmony manifests in risk factors for life course and developmental problems, and potentially negative behavioral outcomes. In some cases, new strengthening ecologies are forming. As families navigate and negotiate multiple cultural frameworks, some families have begun to draw from multiple sources to develop new understandings around gender equity, empathy, and healthy relationships and seek to pass these understandings on to their children.

This study produced findings unique to each community as well as important cross community findings. Key themes include:

- The centrality of the immigrant experience in the intergenerational framework
- The process of relationship learning
- The distinction between culture and cultural communities, specifically in the US
- The distinction between family and community as unit of cultural practice and analysis
- Male dominance and gender equity
- The role of marriage
- Saving face
- Norms around parental modeling versus direct communication
- Broad interest among participants to continue working on these issues

Finally, this study provides insight into effective culturally humble two-generation solutions to prevent domestic violence, including the following recommended strategies:

1) **Promote more open discussion about intimate relationships and domestic violence**

2) **Develop trainings and social groups to build DV prevention skills for parents and families**

3) **Educate, recruit, and organize community leaders to adapt traditional norms to promote gender equity**

Ultimately, this study has helped the collaborative to define a vision, articulate goals, and craft recommendations for the long-term effort to create, test, and implement a culturally attuned Asian American targeted intergenerational life course framework. This effort includes a forthcoming pilot test of a violence prevention curriculum to be conducted with a cohort of parents and youth of five Asian American communities.

Introduction

Introduction

The intergenerational life course framework for domestic violence states that early exposure to violence in the family context can lead to perpetration of domestic violence in adulthood. Different communities may draw from ecological, behavioral, and human development risk factors in very different ways. In fact, each of these factors, ecological, behavioral, and human development, is built upon socio-cultural norms, attitudes, beliefs, and histories of communities. Thus, in order to understand the factors that may increase risk of domestic violence perpetration and those that strengthen domestic violence prevention, it is essential to understand the social ecology, behavioral norms, and attitudes and beliefs of a given community.

To this end, with the support of the Blue Shield of California Foundation, the Asian Pacific Policy and Planning Council (A3PCON) coordinated a community needs assessment regarding domestic violence in Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI)[1] communities in Los Angeles County. Special Service for Groups – Research & Evaluation (SSG R&E), in partnership with Korean American Family Services (KFAM), Koreatown Youth & Community Center (KYCC), Pacific Asian Counseling Services (PACS), Asian Pacific Counseling & Treatment Centers (APCTC), South Asian Network (SAN), and Center for the Pacific Asian Family (CPAF) conducted 23 focus groups with 163 total participants across five Los Angeles County Asian American communities: Cambodian, Chinese, Korean, North Indian Hindu, and Pakistani Muslim.

Collaborative Partners

This study explores risk and protective factors in these five communities, including cultural traditions, norms, attitudes and beliefs, particularly around gender roles, intergenerational family dynamics, intimate relationships, and approaches to child-rearing. Additionally, this study provides insight into effective culturally humble two-generation solutions to prevent domestic violence.

Vision

■ To cultivate an inclusive environment for community-based organizations to contribute to the design and implementation of broad scale approaches to domestic violence prevention in Asian American and Pacific Islander communities by providing more resources and opportunities to exercise their cultural expertise and access to community stakeholders.

Goals

■ To provide insight into cultural dynamics surrounding intimate relationships and healthy relationships in Los Angeles County Asian American communities.

■ To develop recommendations for how to approach the multi-layered issue of domestic violence within Asian American communities, recognizing that it requires parallel approaches at different levels across different stakeholder groups to craft a complex solution for a complicated problem.

Recommended Strategies

■ Promote more open discussion about intimate relationships and domestic violence.

- Facilitate dialogue between the parent and youth generations in each community to tease out and engage with issues connected to generational cultural differences.

■ Develop trainings and social groups to build DV prevention skills for parents and families.

- Develop an Asian American prevention curriculum that can be tailored to the needs of individual communities.

- Build social support apparatus for both women and men.

■ Educate, recruit, and organize community leaders to adapt traditional norms to promote gender equity.

Methodology

Methodology

SSG R&E, in conjunction with A3PCON and six community partners, developed the research design and materials and conducted the data collection and analysis for this study. SSG R&E met with the partners in person before the start of the study to discuss concerns related to the sensitivity of the research topic of domestic violence and ways to mitigate the possible risks to participants. Through that conversation, phone interviews with staff from five of the six partner organizations, and individual phone interviews with three external domestic violence experts, SSG R&E chose to design a focus group protocol looking at healthy and unhealthy relationship dynamics, approaching the research with a primary prevention perspective rather than direct questioning about domestic violence experiences.

In addition, SSG R&E and all partners were intentional about collecting data in a respectful, non-invasive manner, ensuring that there was a thorough informed consent process and document for participants to review and sign, and providing emotional supports and resources for those participating in the focus group in case the discussion triggered negative emotions. As all five of the partners conducting focus groups are mandated reporting agencies and are required by law to report information about suspected child abuse, elder abuse, dependent adult abuse, or harm to self or others, SSG R&E included clear language about the disclosure of personal experiences, so that participants were aware of how the information shared would be used. As part of the informed consent process, staff provided information to participa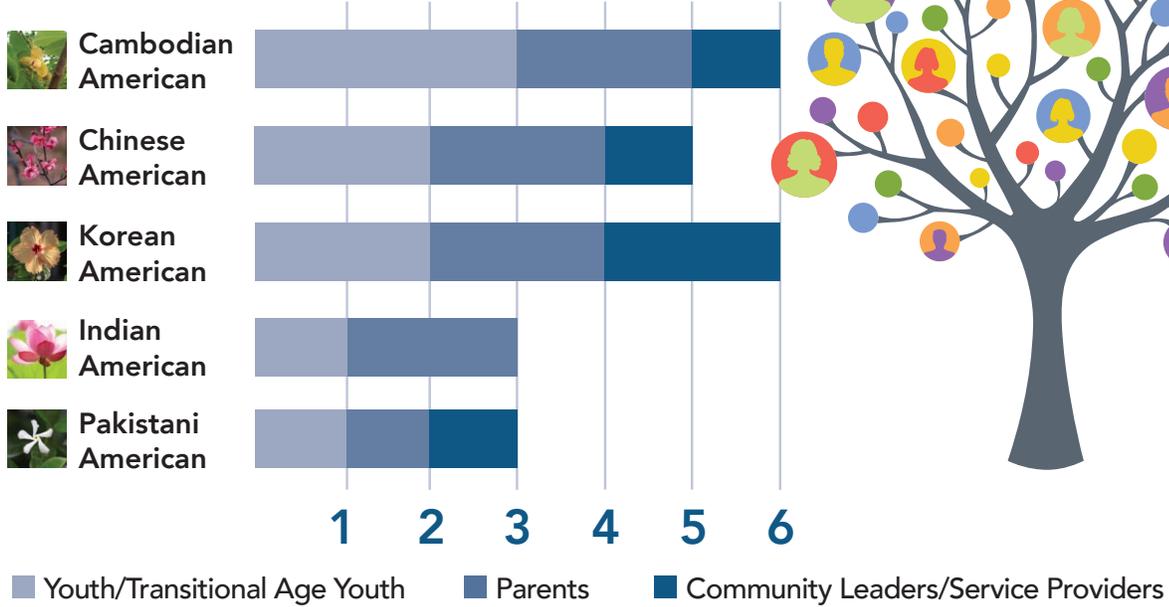nts that their participation, including disclosure of any information, was completely voluntary. This process of informed consent was used to further minimize the risk of harm to the focus group participants as well as the community partners. Additionally, CPAF's helpline was provided for participants to disclose information without the risk of being reported. For each community focus group, there was at least one staff facilitator from the partner organization working within that community, as well as one staff member trained to recognize signs of distress and provide emotional support for participants. A staff note-taker was also made available for focus groups conducted in languages other than English, but was not utilized as all the focus groups were audio-recorded and later transcribed. At least one SSG R&E staff was present at each focus group to answer any study-related questions.

There were originally four Asian American communities of focus selected for the research study based on high prevalence of domestic violence: Cambodian, Chinese, Korean, and South Asian. Due to the diversity of ethnic groups included under the "South Asian" label, SAN suggested focusing on two of the largest groups within the South Asian community: North Indian Hindus and Pakistani Muslims. There were five to six focus groups conducted in each of the original four communities, with different semi-structured question guides for each of the three stakeholder groups (parents, youth and transitional age youth aged 13-25 and service providers and community leaders). All 23 focus groups, ranging from forty-five to ninety minutes in length, were audio-recorded and transcribed.
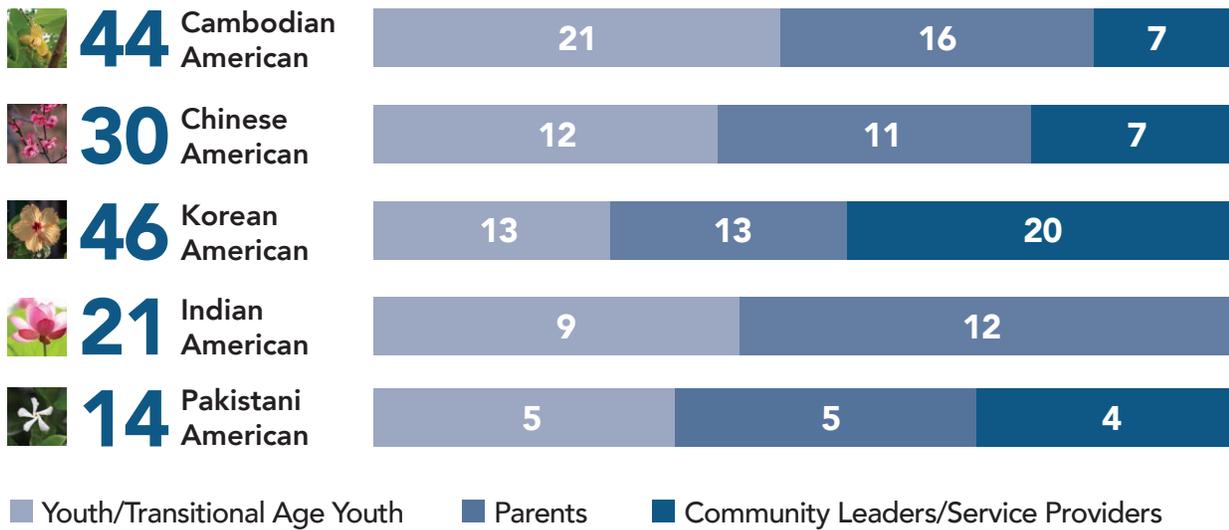
Focus Groups by the Numbers

Total number of FOCUS GROUPS

	Youth/Transitional Age Youth	Parents	Community Leaders/Service Providers
Cambodian American			
Chinese American			
Korean American			
Indian American			
Pakistani American			

1 2 3 4 5 6

■ Youth/Transitional Age Youth   ■ Parents   ■ Community Leaders/Service Providers

Total number of PARTICIPANTS

44 Cambodian American — 21 | 16 | 7

30 Chinese American — 12 | 11 | 7

46 Korean American — 13 | 13 | 20

21 Indian American — 9 | 12

14 Pakistani American — 5 | 5 | 4

■ Youth/Transitional Age Youth   ■ Parents   ■ Community Leaders/Service Providers

Focus group facilitation training by

SSG RESEARCH & EVALUATION

CENTER FOR THE PACIFIC ASIAN FAMILY
NURTURING CHANGE TOGETHER

Focus Groups by the Numbers

Total number of FOCUS GROUPS per language

10 English	**5** Mandarin	**3** Korean
2 Urdu	**2** Khmer	**1** Hindi

Total number of PARTICIPANTS per language

67 English	**30** Mandarin	**29** Korean
5 Urdu	**16** Khmer	**4** Hindi

A team of five SSG R&E staff then reviewed the transcripts and notes from each of the focus groups, conducting thematic analysis using Atlas.ti, a qualitative research software. Many of the initial codes for the coding process came from the focus group protocol subject areas, with inductive content analysis providing additional codes. Following the coding process, a minimum of two staff reviewed the codes by community to determine the themes present for each community, as well as to identify areas for clarification from staff at community partner organizations. SSG R&E staff then held data validation meetings with all partners by community (e.g., meeting with Korean American Family Services and Koreatown Youth and Community Center together about the Korean community data) to review the findings and elicit more insight into the data. Questions were also asked about the domestic violence prevention and intervention resources available in each community during these meetings.

Strengths, Needs & Gaps

A critical piece of this research revolves around the strength of the information collected from these individual groups. The richness in the data collected in this study greatly depended on the engagement of focus group participants who were open to organic conversation around sensitive topics. The conversation around intergenerational influences on the perpetuation of domestic violence was not always direct; however, the personal accounts that participants shared, connected to their own relationship learning and perceptions about healthy relationships, further illustrated how communities engage with these issues. All groups offered salient information about their larger communities' views on domestic violence. Aside from the topic of domestic violence specifically, participants were open to discussing gender and family dynamics more broadly. Participants openly shared their experiences as women or men within their community, family, and intimate partner relationships. Parents were especially interested in discussing and learning about new ways to model behaviors to positively impact their children and to connect by actively having conversations on healthy and unhealthy attributes.

It is important to note that these accounts are not taken as the final data point to represent an entire community, but to provide a starting point to understand the diverse cultural dynamics. The current intergenerational life-course approach provides a new framework to re-analyze and identify risk factors that lead to domestic violence. However, existing research has identified gaps within communities that face additional adversities, including Asian American and Pacific Islander communities. This research provides new insight into these communities and highlights the different experiences around domestic violence for the Cambodian, Chinese, Korean, North Indian Hindu, and Pakistani Muslim American communities. Further exploration and research are needed to better address the unique needs of each community.

For example, many of the conversations in the focus groups revolved around relationships rather than domestic violence itself, and due to time limitations, the study team was unable to follow up on many of the themes that arose in these focus groups, such as the impact of religion, immigration, acculturation, and

socio-economic status. Furthermore, there is a strong need to update and disaggregate data on domestic violence and culturally defined intervention practices in Asian American and Pacific Islander communities. Disaggregated data is imperative in eliminating disparities within Asian American and Pacific Islander communities, as it provides a more accurate depiction of what is happening at the community level. Data on each of the communities, as well as on current culturally defined intervention practices, would have informed the focus group guides and possibly pushed conversations to a deeper level, thus providing a more robust explanation to the intergenerational framework.

The current intergenerational framework lacks an understanding of how the family immigration experience affects intergenerational relationships. It currently identifies the three levels in which the factors that drive domestic violence operate: situational, life course and developmental, and structural and cultural. However, the immigration experience is not easily incorporated into any of these levels. Although the immigration experiences of the participants and their ancestors provided a common thread, the ways in which these experiences manifested in intergenerational relationships differed. The immigrant experiences shaped the participants' views on domestic violence, relationships, and families, and warrant deeper consideration.

The intergenerational life-course framework for domestic violence describes the behavioral and human development consequences of children's early exposure to violence and its implications for future perpetration of domestic violence. This study described how members of Asian American communities in Los Angeles County experience domestic violence, their attitudes and beliefs towards violence and relationships in general, and the risk and protective factors in their lives. Although each community reported its own historically and culturally based experiences, many of these findings reflect similarities to other communities: unhealthy relationships, patriarchal norms, barriers to gender equity, and stigma against talking about domestic violence, among others. However, perhaps the most important finding for this study was that intergenerational relationships, including parenting and grandparenting, were inextricably linked to the conditions surrounding family immigration stories.

Among Cambodian American participants, these stories involved a refugee process and escaping the atrocities of the Khmer Rouge. For the Korean, Chinese, and North Indian American participants, these stories involved pursuit of economic opportunity, though, depending on the period of emigration, this could vary from escaping poverty to seeking high-paying professional opportunities. Pakistani participants also largely followed economic immigration patterns; however, their Muslim faith presented other challenges in the US, where Islamophobia has attracted bigotry and violence.

These immigration narratives reflect a core piece of family dynamics and may inform how families communicate; who is present in the household (for instance, are men away working, or have they been killed); what is their connection to their extended family; economic stress; views regarding authority and law enforcement; and overall family trauma. Moreover, the process of navigating adaptation or assimilation, and the differing experiences among generations, has introduced stressors from and challenges for navigating a multicultural space. These are all risk factors for the transmission of intergenerational violence.

This study also illustrated and emphasized the diversity both among and within Asian American communities in Los Angeles County and, critically, how the unique historical and cultural backgrounds of each community present different risk factors regarding domestic violence and different strengthening factors for domestic violence prevention. For example, the origins of many Cambodians as refugees and survivors of genocide manifest as a high incidence of PTSD and other psychosocial vulnerabilities, particularly regarding violence. Moreover, the history of cultural erasure has left local Cambodians with fewer cultural institutions upon which to rely and has necessitated the creation of new community resources. Korean community life in Los Angeles is built around the Korean churches, so much so that non-Christian Koreans join churches just in order to create and maintain community connections. Although the strength of the church has allowed local Koreans to build robust culturally attuned support structures, the centrality of the church to Korean life has implications for attitudes towards and norms about healthy relationships, as well as approaches to addressing relationship violence. The Chinese community in Los Angeles County is, in fact, a collection of communities with a shared ethnic background and different cultural, economic, political, and national origin backgrounds. Some participants who are ethnically Chinese many not identify as "Chinese" but as "Taiwanese" or "Viet Chi." Although these participants all spoke Mandarin, they reflect different groups of people who may work and socialize in different spaces. Finally, the coherence of the North Indian Hindu and Pakistani Muslim focus groups was also almost immediately problematized when participants observed that there are important distinctions to be made within these groups as well.

Ultimately, this process and these examples demonstrate that the "AAPI community" is not monolithic, and, given the diversity of Asian American and Pacific Islander communities in Los Angeles, the term and concept may be of limited use. A prevention effort among Cambodians will need to frame issues differently and utilize different community resources than the Korean community. Moreover, even within specific communities, such as the five featured in this study, there is variation in cultural background. Thus, an effective disaggregated intergenerational prevention framework will require distinct strategies to identify community-specific issues, activate multiple worldviews and practices, and access specific community resources.

Recommended Strategies for Impact

Each community navigates domestic violence and unhealthy relationships in its own way, and this uniqueness should be considered even when discussing shared strategies for impact. Considering the diversity of the communities in this study, there are multiple approaches that could be taken to strengthen communities against risk of domestic violence. However, the findings revealed that there are shared strategies of impact that can be used across all groups. The findings of this study recommend strategies that center around changing norms from within each community, such as promoting more open discussion, implementing trainings and social groups to understand better parenting styles, and working with community leaders to affirm new social and cultural norms.

Open discussion about domestic violence matters is not typical nor supported among the communities in the study. Part of the need for open communication is to help younger generations feel more comfortable asking questions about unhealthy relationship habits they are seeing or experiencing. More open discussion about domestic violence can lead to early recognition of situations that can lead to domestic violence in familial or romantic relationships. However, the youth within each community expressed feeling uncomfortable speaking with their parents about relationships because either their parents did not understand their experiences or the youth are afraid of their parents' judgment. Similarly, parents in each community discussed not wanting their children to see or know about domestic violence happening in the household, for fear that the harmony of the house would be disrupted. Changing the cultural norms around disclosure and open communication about risk factors to domestic violence could help improve understanding of domestic violence. While the communication must be approached in a way that does not reinforce problematic dynamics in either a family unit or in the larger community, being able to talk more freely about these issues can ultimately help change the cultural narrative of what is an acceptable, healthy relationship.

In addition to strengthening communication and raising awareness, participants expressed a desire to develop more tools to improve their skills in cultivating healthy relationships. Some of the parents, community leaders, and service providers from each community mentioned a desire to have parenting trainings or social groups for parents to learn from each other's parenting styles. Recognizing that parenting happens in many different forms, some participants spoke of learning how to parent from classes or from talking to their neighbors who had healthy relationships with their spouses and their children. Social groups were suggested as a potential resource for isolated fathers whom participants felt had no one to talk to about problems that were specific to men and fathers. These groups would serve as outlets and learning resources for men to attend alone or to support with activities where they could bond with their children, without the mother. The benefits of these trainings and social groups are improving familial relationships and opening the possibility of parenting in a way that creatively adapts traditional cultural norms to be healthier for individual families.

Community leaders are widely seen as the stewards of cultural identity, and they are respected for their influence over the larger community, which makes them important figures for changing cultural norms that may enforce unhealthy relationship behaviors. Participants in all groups spoke of fear that the larger community would hold negative judgment over families that seem dysfunctional or to have strayed from traditional values. Community leaders are seen as sources of wisdom, advice, and leadership for problems in many capacities. Thus, they can help shape, redefine, and exemplify how to have open communication without ridicule, discuss domestic violence situations that lead to prevention and non-judgmental help, and help normalize gender equity within the community and families. Participants in each community reported that community leaders and the larger community hold immense social power, which made it important to save face instead of openly acknowledging unhealthy relationships. In this way, community leaders are critical figures in changing cultural norms that reverberate throughout the larger community, families, and individual community members themselves.

Findings

This study has revealed compelling findings in several areas and lays the groundwork to not only describe some of the unique needs around domestic violence prevention in the Cambodian, Chinese, Korean, North Indian, and Pakistani American communities in Los Angeles County, but also recommend a shared framework for violence prevention. As such, the cross-community findings are introduced first, highlighting the themes common to all five communities and presenting the shared cultural dimensions of the intergenerational domestic violence framework. The subsequent sections explore in more depth the findings specific to each individual community, illuminating more focused themes, patterns, and examples. This approach allows for both the capture of critical and unique dimensions to each of the studied communities while also laying the groundwork for a shared AAPI framework.

Intergenerational immigrant experience intersectionality

For each of the five communities in the study, intergenerational relationships, including parenting and grandparenting, were inextricably linked to the conditions surrounding family immigration stories. For some community groups, these reflected experiences escaping violence, while others' experiences reflected pursuit of economic opportunities. Depending on their country of origin, socioeconomic background before and after migration, time in the US, and the level of bigotry encountered, the dynamics of intergenerational relationships varied greatly across communities. Immigration narratives reflect a core piece of family dynamics, particularly intergenerational dynamics. This is perhaps the most critical finding for this study, and it is presented in greater detail in the discussion section.

Relationship learning

Participants discussed premarital dating in the context of family expectations, rules, and relationship learning. Norms in the communities that acknowledged premarital relationships prohibit dating before college, and some of the youth and young adult participants reported adhering to this while others did not. Virtually all participants across the five communities reported substantial barriers to communication between youth and parents about dating and intimate relationships. Participants described communication that does happen between generations as more commonly being indirect. For instance, parents will intentionally model a relationship for their children, and children will observe how their parents and how their peers' parents interact. However, youth participants indicated that parents were not trusted sources on dating or any other subjects of a vulnerable or intimate nature. In some cases, this was because youth anticipated that parents would not support their relationships, particularly if dating outside the culture. In other cases, youth felt that their parents, many of whom had arranged marriages or got married for reasons other than romantic intimacy, did not know much about dating according to American norms and, therefore, had little constructive advice to contribute. This view was reinforced by youth observing their parents' unhealthy relationships. While youth reported barriers to discussing relationships with their parents, youth did not report any firm alternatives for learning about

relationships. Some youth reported learning from their peers; but many expressed feeling uncomfortable talking to anyone about these topics and struggled through learning how to navigate intimate relationships from mass media and otherwise, in isolation.

Culture versus cultural community

Participants distinguished between "culture" and "my community." For instance, participants described norms of the "Korean culture," but then discuss how those norms were not strictly upheld in the Los Angeles Korean American community. In some cases, this seemed to reflect projections of cultural tradition based on second-hand understanding—for instance, youth described Korean culture based on conversations with their parents, peers, or consumption of Korean media, but not first-hand knowledge of what Korean culture looked like in Korea. In other cases, it appeared to reflect perceptions of assimilation. For instance, some Cambodian participants discussed how "American culture" around morality did not align with the pillars of Buddhism, with which the older generations were raised, and expressed concern with how pressure from American norms affected their young people. Furthermore, the framing of "traditional culture" was challenging to navigate. It was difficult to disentangle and differentiate perceptions of traditional culture and norms in participants' countries of origin from the traditional culture as manifested in Southern California but in contrast to American culture. These findings shaped both the assumptions and approaches involved in developing a culturally attuned prevention framework.

Family versus community as the unit of analysis

Although cultural background does frame attitudes and norms in these communities, participants reported tremendous variability in norms and practices within communities around communication, empathy, and gender equity. Instead, these variations aligned more specifically with individual families, family structure, experience, and personal priorities. For instance, some Chinese participants described their families as having rigid gender roles and rigid communication norms, and generally providing an unsafe space to discuss relationships. Other Chinese participants described their families as being more equitable in family structure and more open and trusting of a space to discuss relationships. This dichotomy was mirrored across all five of the communities.

Male dominance and gender equity

Male dominance was a pervasive theme across communities. Formal rules, informal social expectations, and more invisible habits and attitudes all reinforce the norm that men occupy the positions of power within families and across society. This norm is reinforced by many aspects of culture including religious scripture and practices, social networks, mass media, and other cultural activities. Furthermore, this dynamic is not hidden. Participants across focus groups quickly identified male dominance as a significant dimension of their community's social reality, and many described it as problematic, particularly in the context of increasingly "modern" attitudes and changing demands on women's roles both inside and outside the home.

As changing circumstances have altered family dynamics, one factor that seemed to stand out regarding family structure and gender equity was the presence of a strong female role model in the household. A number of participants described how having a female-led household shaped their attitudes and habits to be more supportive of gender equity. For instance, one Chinese participant described watching his parents both work and both contribute to household chores and how that made an impact on his understanding of parity with his siblings. A Cambodian participant described being raised by all women, a mother and aunts, because the men in the family were killed by the Khmer Rouge. Despite the tragedy they saw, these women pushed forward and supported their families without remarrying, which inspired her to believe she could have a life without depending on a male partner.

The role of marriage

Participants across communities described marriage as a familial or social institution rather than a romantic or relational one. For that reason, other members of the family are invested in individual marriages, depending on them to keep the family intact and to demonstrate family strength and presence in the community. These considerations prioritize the bond of marriage as an institution over the interpersonal relationship, which can lead to the maintenance of unhealthy dynamics or covering up instances of violence. As a result, violence is not broadly discussed among family members, at church, or across broader social networks.

Saving face

The concept and practice of saving face was a theme common among participants across communities. Families do not want to raise up issues that might attract negative attention or lead to social ostracism. Moreover, saving face manifested as a concern among youth who did not want to worry their parents or were hesitant to put parents in a position where they might have to choose between their children's health and the family name.

Learning from parental relationship modeling rather than through direct communication

Participants across communities described learning about relationships by watching their parents rather than talking with them. There were barriers to directly communicating about romantic relationships, and even about familial relationships, such as between parent and child. As a result, children watched how their parents interacted, thought about the aspects they do not like, and tried to avoid engaging in those behaviors. Moreover, parents reported reflecting on their own upbringing, considered the things they disliked about how they were raised, and then raised their children differently, cultivating relationships with them that were vastly different from the relationships they had with their own parents.

Interest in working on these issues of domestic violence more directly

Although participants described barriers to direct communication with their parents about these issues, there was widespread interest in working on these issues more directly. Some participants felt that they lacked the tools to have productive conversations about relationship dynamics and instead found ways to have these conversations indirectly, for instance, speaking about marriage and roles in marriage, rather than relationships.

Participants appeared more ready to discuss healthy and unhealthy relationships than violence in the home. Whenever violence specifically was brought up, participants were hesitant to engage with the questions. When participants did share their experiences with domestic or household violence, it typically elicited a strong emotional response both from the person sharing and in some cases from other participants, which then also quieted conversation on the topic. Participants did engage in discussions about the factors that lead to violence, such as relationship dynamics and community dynamics. Some groups spoke in generalities, while others gave concrete examples.

Perhaps the most important learning from this community needs assessment was the revelation that there is widespread willingness to have more intentional conversations about relationships and violence. Participants felt they had not had the opportunity to discuss these issues among their peers; and for many, this was their first opportunity to talk about their culture in an abstract way. For some participants, this was a revelatory experience which enabled them to consider some of these issues through a cultural lens and see their experiences reflected among their peers: "I went through that too, and I struggled with it." This was an empathic experience for some participants. For some of the women in these focus groups, they were able to step outside their own parenting experiences and consider "I don't have to parent the way I was parented," and find peer support.

Cambodian American Community

Following the overthrow of the Khmer Rouge regime in 1979, there was a large exodus from Cambodia. During the subsequent 15 years, nearly 160,000 Cambodians came to the United States (US), with over 94% of them as refugees fleeing genocide and its aftermath. The Cambodian American population in the US has swelled to more than 320,000, with Long Beach, California representing a primary landing spot for Cambodian resettlement and boasting the largest population of Cambodians outside of Cambodia; the US Census Bureau has estimated approximately 20,000 individuals of Cambodian descent live in Long Beach, a number almost certainly undercounted.

T he recent history of Cambodia and the Khmer Rouge regime has profoundly impacted the profile of the local Cambodian population. Cambodians have high rates of poverty at 19%, compared to 8% for Whites and 10% for Asians in general.[3] Cambodians have a lower level of education than other groups in the US, with more than 31.8% of individuals over the age of 25 having less than a high school degree, compared to 12% overall.[4] This reflects the background of the refugees, many of whom arrived without formal education because the educated professional class was targeted by the Khmer Rouge genocide. Many of the refugee families arriving in the US were single female head of households, as many of the men died or were killed during the regime.

This background contextualizes the Los Angeles County Cambodian American community. Much of the local Cambodian community is first-generation and, having survived the Killing Fields,[5] have first-hand recollections of the war, regime, and refugee ordeals. An estimated two-thirds of Cambodians in Long Beach suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and more than half suffer from major depression. This background of trauma has affected the ability of many Cambodians to develop economic security in their new environment, broken down traditional norms about family structure, and introduced major external stressors to relationships. Thus, the Southern California Cambodian American community has had to re-establish cultural institutions and develop new norms to support itself, all while navigating the process of acculturating to a new environment.

Themes

There were six Cambodian focus groups, including two youth, one transition aged youth, two parent, and one community leader focus group. A total of 50 individuals participated. The Cambodian focus groups identified several key findings regarding gender dynamics both within the family and throughout Cambodian society more broadly. Some of the key themes included the refugee experience and Khmer Rouge regime, traditional gender roles, the educational system upholding them, and

general challenges adapting to mainstream culture in the US.

The refugee experience and the Khmer Rouge regime and the genocide that precipitated it have dramatically affected family dynamics among Cambodians abroad and in the US. Between 1.7 and 3 million people were estimated killed, between 1975 and 1979, in a country of 8 million. The Khmer Rouge targeted former government officials, military leaders, intellectuals, professional classes, and the monkhood. This led to the erasure of Cambodian cultural history and, due to traditions around employment, the killing of a disproportionate

number of men, leaving many families without breadwinners. During this time, it was common for single survivors to be rounded up and forcibly married, often uniting strangers. Both factors threw traditional family dynamics into disarray.

The gender roles in traditional Cambodian culture are built around the dominance of men, with the men's role as the breadwinner and the women's role as primary homemaker. These traditional norms allow few socially acceptable places for women to work outside the home. However, gender roles are not just built around work inside and outside the home but involve a much broader set of behavioral expectations. These behaviors are governed by a guidebook that was developed as part of the formal education system for women. Traditionally, men in Cambodia were educated at monasteries as part of a compulsory monastic initiation and service. Much of this education revolved around religious teachings and guidance on meritorious behavior in secular society. Once secular schools were established, this guidebook provided similar education to women, reinforcing their roles as wives and mothers and promoting the righteousness of submission to their husbands. These teachings also dictated that women's delicacy and purity must be protected by both women and men, by keeping them in the household and out of the workforce.

> *"Yes, men are like gold and women are like cottons and flowers."*
>
> *— Cambodian parent*

After over a million men were killed under the Khmer Rouge regime, a multitude of households were led by single women, and perceptions about what constituted appropriate behavior changed. Women who did not remarry and instead worked to provide for their children were revered as "strong women," chaste widows who could raise a family on their own. Alternatively, single fathers were expected to get remarried in order to have someone raise their children. So, although the attitude towards working women changed in this context, it reinforced some broader chauvinistic attitudes that value chaste women, pressure women not to remarry, and allowed for women to work outside the home as long as there was no man to occupy that role.

Domestic Violence

The focus group participants also identified some key factors contributing to the risk of domestic violence. These themes included legal and social enforcement of norms governing family dynamics, differences in these modes of enforcement between Cambodia and the US, and stigmas against asking for help and becoming involved in the affairs of other families.

Focus group respondents described Cambodia as a society with laws against domestic violence on the books, but with no effective apparatus to enforce those laws. On the other hand, Cambodian civil society has a strong set of social norms that are more rigidly, if informally, enforced by family and community. Although there are laws against domestic violence, the social norms around gender roles and family dynamics are more authoritative than formal laws in Cambodian communities. This effectively means that Cambodian women are at high risk for domestic violence, with few resources or avenues of recourse.

In the US, the issue is the opposite. Cambodians are finding that there are strictly enforced laws regarding domestic violence and a less cohesive community to provide social support or coherent messaging on local social norms. Respondents reported that this reversal has confused many Cambodian men who know they cannot engage in domestic violence, but do not have the cultural resources to reinterpret family dynamics in the new setting.

While strict enforcement may dissuade men from engaging in domestic violence, it has also reinforced existing stigmas against women seeking help. Reporting a violent partner now carries the potential consequence of arrest, prison, deportation, or otherwise prolonged separation. This can play into concerns around financial dependence. Moreover, with "saving face" as an important part of Cambodian culture, there is a strong stigma against showing weakness. Participants suggested that reporting domestic violence would reflect weakness not just on the part of the woman making the complaint, but on the family in general. Finally, women resist making complaints for fear of retaliation from abusers and reported death threats by abusers against themselves and their children.

Respondents also reported social pressure against intervening in domestic violence situations of other families. This hesitancy seems to be due to a combination of two factors: stigma against becoming involved in the business of other families, and a trauma response to the violent authoritarian rule of the Khmer Rouge.

> *"In Cambodia, we have a saying that if a sore is not in pain, don't poke it, meaning don't allow other people's problems to cause problems in your own family. However, in the US, we are encouraged to speak up, if we see something, say something. That's something very new to me."*
>
> *— Cambodian Parent*

Because the emigration from Cambodia transpired largely in the late 1970s and early 1980s, the Cambodian community in the US is relatively young and includes both first-generation immigrants and refugees as well as their American-born children. As such, the older and younger generations experienced starkly different upbringings. Parents grew up in the traditions of their home country and then endured war, genocide, and escape. Children raised in Southern California were surrounded by the diverse environs of the greater Los Angeles metropolitan area. Moreover, Cambodian youth in the US grew up with high exposure to mainstream Western culture through media, peers, school, and their neighborhood. As a result, Cambodian youth must navigate multiple cultural value systems, particularly when it comes to issues such as intimate relationships, where Cambodian tradition and mainstream American culture seem to contrast.

Both parents and youth respondents discussed the challenges faced by families in negotiating an acculturation process. One of the biggest challenges for Cambodian parents was their perceived lack of control. In Cambodia, parents and families in general have had an important voice in intimate relationships, including identifying and arranging suitable partners for their children. Cambodian parents acknowledged that youth in the US have more agency in their decision-making about intimate relationships and other things, but still

tried to pressure their children to marry other suitable Cambodians. Cambodian youth, on the other hand, have felt that their parents have little to offer in the way of advice on intimate relationships, because many of their marriages were arranged and most parents have limited experience with American dating practices.

This disconnect exacerbated more fundamental barriers to communication between parents and children. Focus group respondents described extremely limited direct communication on relationship issues between parents and children. Parents described how they taught their children about relationships by modeling behavior, avoiding fighting in front of their children and performing their appropriate roles. Both parents and youth respondents mentioned that the stigma against showing weakness was a deterrent to participating in honest and vulnerable conversations about relationships within the family, and both groups sought confidants elsewhere. Finally, both groups referenced cultural norms about family dynamics as a barrier to communication. Specifically, in Cambodian households, it is more important to convey respect than affection. This creates distance between parents who might feel that their Americanized children are disrespectful and youth who feel that their immigrant parents are cold or unfeeling.

> *"They would say 'This is my grandson. You take the flesh and give me the bones.'"*
>
> *— Cambodian young adult*

Finally, Cambodian norms around corporal punishment may not only create distance between parents and children but also normalize violence in the household. In Cambodia, corporal punishment is commonplace in child-rearing and in school discipline. In fact, there is a common expression used by Cambodian parents that gives permission to others to physically discipline their children.

While this may be a norm of child-rearing and discipline in the Cambodian tradition, American-born youth are familiar with this saying and with its implementation.

Cambodian participants described the challenges of adapting to a new society as a culture shock for the community and within families with American-born

children. These stresses created distance within families, introduced new barriers to communication, and perpetuated norms around violence in the household.

Community Assets

The Cambodian community in Southern California is largely concentrated in and around the city of Long Beach, but there are also small Cambodian enclaves in the Chinatown district of Los Angeles, the Inland Empire region east of Los Angeles, and the Santa Ana area in Orange County. Most Cambodian-serving organizations, including mainstream providers with Khmer-language service capacity, are concentrated in the Long Beach area, which is home to Cambodia Town. This area also has a more concentrated presence of Cambodian retailers, restaurants, cultural amenities, and temples.

There are substantial barriers for Cambodians to access domestic violence prevention or intervention services, including cultural norms and attitudes and language barriers. Thus, cultural and linguistic competency is essential to conduct effective outreach, provide treatment and supportive services, and raise awareness about the issue of domestic violence.

The more established Cambodian non-profit organizations have capacity in general supportive services, outreach and education, and health promotion. While some Cambodian community-based organization service providers do provide domestic violence prevention and intervention services, overall capacity is limited. Individuals needing or requesting mental health treatment are typically referred to larger AAPI-serving mental health nonprofits, such as Pacific Asian Counseling Services (PACS), which have clinical expertise and Khmer-language capacity. Similarly, individuals needing domestic violence services are referred to Center for the Pacific Asian Family (CPAF), a pan-Asian serving organization.

However, domestic violence remains a taboo subject among Cambodians and continues to go undetected even by service providers working with victims through other programs. As a result, law enforcement and the courts serve as a major source of referrals for domestic violence services in the Cambodian community, and mainstream resources, such as Department of Mental Health-operated clinics, have developed the capacity to provide culturally and linguistically competent services to Cambodian clients.
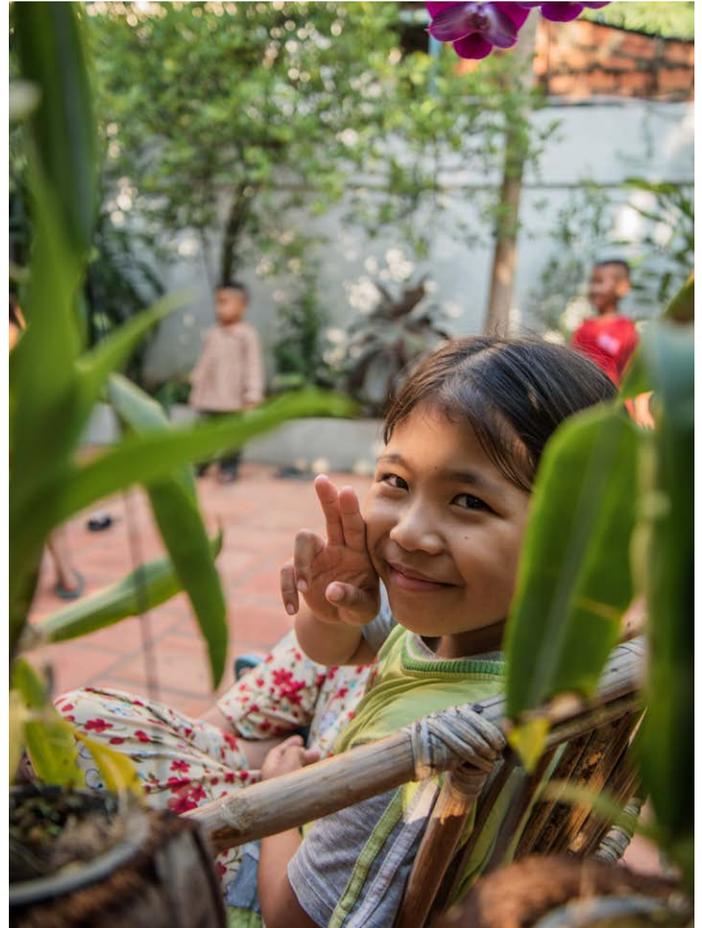
Because of taboos related to mental health services and other public programs, local Cambodians often look elsewhere for support, including cultural and religious institutions. For instance, a network of Buddhist temples throughout the region offers a potential entry point for service providers to conduct outreach for services and through which to disseminate information on domestic violence prevention among respected community leaders.

Conclusion

Both the history of trauma and the cultural rebirth of Cambodians are deeply entangled in the social and cultural ecologies in which children are raised in Cambodian communities in Los Angeles County. The themes of female subordination, male domination, legal and social enforcement of norms, and stigma were each identified as key factors related to violence in households. The challenges associated with cultural adaption have created additional stresses to intergenerational family dynamics and introduced new barriers to communication within families.

Chinese American Community

Following the repeal of the Chinese Exclusion Act and other restrictions on non-European immigrants, immigrants seeking economic opportunity came to the U.S. from mainland China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan. This "second wave" of immigrants came with or in search of education and have largely settled into professional careers. Chinese adults in the US have much higher rates of education than both US-born and other foreign-born populations: 54.7% of Chinese adults have at least a bachelor's degree compared with about 32.7% of the native-born population and 31.4% of foreign-born populations who hold a bachelor's degree.[6] While some Chinese immigrants come to the US with high levels of education and a professional background, others maintain a relatively high level of linguistic isolation, with about 41% of the Chinese American population having limited English proficiency.[7]

Cultural psychologists describe China as a traditional and conservative country that highly emphasizes the collectivism of social solidarity, family unity, and self-sacrifice.[8] According to this cultural worldview, an individual's obligation is to maintain harmonious relationships and avoid conflict. This stands in contrast to the individualistic norms of the US, where partners are more able and likely to exit relationships when their needs are not being met.[9]

Within the Chinese community in Southern California, cultural identity is not monolithic, and "Chinese American" or "Chinese Immigrant," in fact, captures a great diversity of generational, geographic, and immigration backgrounds. Focus group participants represented substantial diversity in background and included individuals originally from Taiwan, Hong Kong, Mainland China, and Vietnam. Additionally, participants included recent immigrants, long-time immigrants, parents who brought children to the US, parents who raised children in the US, and international students. Furthermore, these participants represented a range of class backgrounds.

Themes

Drawing from this diversity of perspectives, the Chinese focus groups provided insights into several key areas that inform risk factors and strengthening factors involving domestic violence. These areas include relationship dynamics, gender roles, and their interaction with the intergenerational immigration experience. There were five Chinese focus groups, including two transition aged youth groups, two parent groups, and one service provider group, with a total of 30 participants.

For Chinese American participants, gender roles played a foundational role in defining intimate relationships. Traditional gender roles describe a patriarchal configuration, wherein men work outside the home and provide financial means for families and women are responsible for managing the household and raising children. Specifically, women represent the "glue"
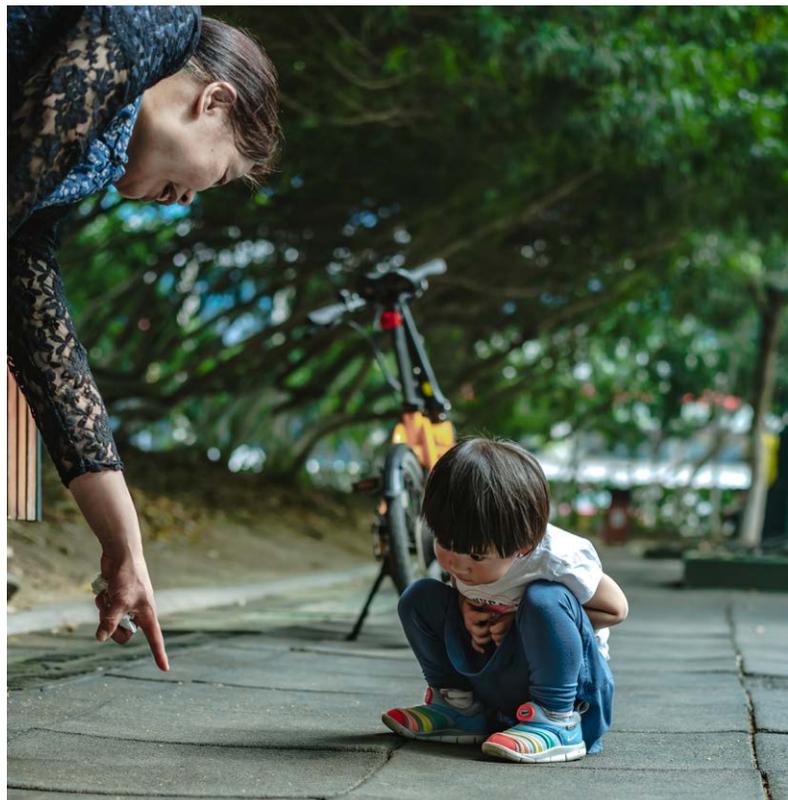
of the family and are responsible for creating and maintaining a harmonious ambiance. The concept of "harmony" within the family carries significance both as a structure within the family and in the context of domestic violence risk.

Some respondents described gender roles in the context of fundamental socio-biological differences between the sexes: men and women are simply different. Men are taught to be independent, detached, and macho, whereas women are expected to be caring and accommodating. This outlook seems to rationalize the structures that uphold different roles in the family and was cited as a reason that effective communication between the sexes was ultimately limited.

In Chinese American communities, these gender dynamics appear to have been challenged by the immigration experience. For instance, in Southern California, it can be very difficult for a family to thrive

on a single income, which tests the role of men as the sole breadwinner. This introduces stress to men, particularly immigrant men who may have more difficulty finding work, have fewer networks for social support, and may experience more isolation.

As women move into the workforce, several things occur: women obtain more economic independence and they assume more financial responsibilities within the household. However, the traditional role of primary parent and homemaker remains, creating new stresses for women as their additional responsibilities are not offset by the adoption of household responsibilities by men. Communication about changing roles and misaligned expectations seems to be exacerbated by gendered norms around communication and limited social support for the immigrant experience.

> *I attended a mothers' group where people there are mainly Caucasians, and I learned something—just let your husband do his best. I learned from the American moms that just let your husband take care of children for a couple of hours at a time. Don't give them any rules like: don't eat fast food and stuff. Basically, as long as [the kid is] still breathing, they're fine. The point is to let your husband know how hard it is to be a full-time parent.*
>
> *— Chinese parent*

Ultimately, these changing dynamics within families and relationships have made it difficult to maintain harmony, particularly if that responsibility falls to overburdened women. As a result, participants reported seeing more divorce and less stigma surrounding divorce than in the past.

Domestic Violence

The dynamics presented above offer a cultural context for attitudes, risks, and strengthening factors connected to domestic violence.

First, there remains a stigma against acknowledging or intervening in issues of domestic violence. Unlike child abuse or elder abuse, there is not a clear perception of domestic violence as a problem. Domestic violence

seems to fall within the expected norms of a marriage relationship, insofar as it should be able to be endured with little to no outside involvement. As such, intervention is not seen as an appropriate response except in extreme cases. This belief is reinforced by other attitudes and perceptions, such as continued stigma against divorce and admiration for the achievements of children who are raised in turbulent or violent households. These attitudes together contribute to a sociocultural context that cultivates risk for domestic violence.

Additionally, the value of family harmony, specifically the role of women in maintaining the integrity of the family at all costs, presents an important risk factor for domestic violence in Chinese American households. This attitude is built on a central tenet of Confucian family values, as well as on broader cultural values of placing the needs of others before self. It creates intense pressure on women to endure abuse, remain in abusive relationships, and potentially continue to expose their children to a violent environment for the sake of maintaining harmony. In fact, the discovery by community members or friends of domestic violence within a family may be viewed as a failure of a woman to maintain a harmonious household. Even as women establish more economic independence and a willingness to separate from partners, the pressure to maintain family harmony, built on thousands of years of cultural tradition, may be hard to change or ignore.

The breakdown of traditional roles, norms, and expectations has also introduced stress to relationships. For immigrant families, this stress is magnified by cultural isolation and lack of social support, particularly for men. Cultural attitudes against expressing vulnerability, stigma against the utilization of mental health services, and traditional barriers of intimate communication between partners isolate men in their stress.

Alternatively, some respondents reported that the changing structures have strengthened families. For instance, as women enter the workforce, men are forced to take on more responsibilities caring for children and attending to the household. This shift has helped to establish gender parity in roles in the home and cultivated empathy among men who may not have appreciated the scope of burdens placed upon women in the household.

The structured roles of Chinese family relationships extend beyond those of husband and wife to include the parent-child relationship. Participants from both the parent and youth focus groups described norms around affection in Chinese American families. Specifically, affection is not expressed verbally or physically, but rather through actions.

> *"I also feel Chinese are more modest in showing our love and affection. We don't talk much about love, but we just do things for you. We don't show love through our body language either. We're more stiff that way. You know love can be expressed in many different ways, I feel the way we as Chinese show love is more monotone. I feel there should be more than just one way."*
>
> *— Chinese parent*

Like other aspects of family dynamics, these norms of affection are adapting to the new norms of the local environment. Strict discipline, particularly corporal punishment, is less acceptable in the US, and children

are looking to their parents for the support and affection they perceive as the norm in the local cultural context. Furthermore, the role of grandparents to support working immigrant parents in child-rearing has contributed to a bifurcation of roles, where grandparents take on more caregiving and parents take on more discipline. These dynamics seem to establish new barriers to communication and understanding among generations within the household, particularly around family dynamics and conceptualization of healthy relationships.

Additionally, respondents reported that grandparents either intentionally or inadvertently reinforce traditional gender roles by treating children differently based on gender, favoring boys over girls. Some parents find this undermines their own efforts to raise their children more equitably. In some cases, grandparents also reinforce gender stereotypes with the way that they treat parents.

Respondents described the stress of adapting traditional norms to new cultural contexts as a source of underlying stress in Chinese households and on relationships within families. These stresses isolate partners, impede communication, and sometimes ultimately manifest in violence.

Community Assets

The Chinese community is relatively dispersed throughout the greater Los Angeles region. However, there are larger concentrations of community assets and resources in the places where historic enclaves have settled, specifically, in the Historic Chinatown corridor and in the San Gabriel Valley. Chinatown was the landing spot for previous generations of Chinese immigrants and many historical assets, including cultural organizations and long-standing Chinese-serving community-based organizations, are established there. The San Gabriel Valley has become a landing spot for subsequent waves of immigration from China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan and so, the organizations and services located there tend to be oriented towards serving more recent immigrants. These amenities include community-based organizations, educational centers, cultural activities and recreation, restaurants, and a variety of faith-based organizations.

Chinese-specific resources for domestic violence take several forms and involve interconnected networks of formal and informal service providers. Due to the long history of Chinese migration to Southern California, there are well established culturally and linguistically competent service providers, including Asian Pacific Counseling and Treatment Centers (APCTC) and Center for the Pacific Asian Family (CPAF) that provide services and resources for domestic violence, mental health, and other general support needs. Organizations such as these can move both in Chinese cultural spaces and mainstream service provider spaces. Other resources for Chinese community members are faith-based organizations, such as Buddhist temples or Christian churches. Religious authority figures are often among the first approached to provide family counseling in times of need. Finally, there are other individuals and organizations that have a reputation for working on issues of domestic violence in the Chinese community, including several private practice therapists who specialize in domestic violence issues.

Barriers to accessing domestic violence resources in the Chinese community exist on several levels and inhibit access to resources. First, there is a strong taboo against injecting oneself into someone else's personal relationships. Unlike child abuse and elder abuse, the conflation of domestic violence with appropriate behavior within an intimate relationship gives pause to community leaders, who may resist intervention until circumstances become extreme. Additionally, there are external forces that pressure women to stay in unhealthy relationships, including concerns about involving law enforcement because of immigration status, the broadly shared attitude that the sanctity of marriage or the tranquility of a household must be preserved at all costs, and a fairly common view that under certain circumstances it is okay for men to hurt women.

Expanding access to resources has seen success in several avenues. The Chinese language media has been an effective vehicle for public service announcements (PSAs) on domestic violence and advertisements for Chinese-serving domestic violence service providers. Additionally, service providers have begun to work with community leaders to build their awareness and understanding of domestic violence issues so they can be more effective at identifying suspected cases of domestic violence and better prepared to intervene in abusive relationships, and more consistently connect women to the available professional resources.

Conclusion

Norms around gender roles, family dynamics, expressions of affection, discipline, communication, and child-rearing all contribute to the ecology in which children are raised in Chinese communities in Los Angeles County. The intergenerational immigrant experience has destabilized traditional family ecologies and has introduced stressful dynamics. This family disharmony manifests in risk factors for life course and developmental problems and potentially negative behavioral outcomes. In some cases, new strengthening ecologies are forming. As families navigate and negotiate multiple cultural frameworks, some families have begun to draw from multiple sources to develop new understandings around gender equity, empathy, and healthy relationships and seek to pass these understandings on to their children.

Korean American Community

Over 95% of the Korean American population in the US migrated in the post-1965 era due to the push and pull factors during the time.[10] Following the Korean War, many Koreans sought refuge, employment, and education outside of Korea as the war had left the country politically and economically insecure. Many looked towards the US, as it had been deeply involved with South Korea during the war and had cultivated economic, political, and military relations. As the Immigration Act of 1965 passed and abolished prior racist laws that prevented non-Northwestern Europeans from entering the US, from 1965 to 1990 Korean immigrants moved to the US at dramatically higher rates than before. Most of these immigrants and their descendants reside in California, with the largest populations in Los Angeles County and Orange County, which hosted 31% of the United States' Korean immigrants in 2017.[11]

Korean immigrants tend to be more highly educated compared to the overall foreign-born population and the native-born population. Thirty-four percent of Korean immigrants hold a bachelor's degree,[12] while 32.7% of the native-born population and 31.4% of foreign-born populations hold bachelor's degrees.[13] Despite higher educational attainment, Korean immigrants have higher rates of limited English proficiency and lower rates of workforce participation compared to the overall foreign-born population. While 48% of the total foreign-born population has limited English proficiency, 50% of the Korean immigrant population has limited English proficiency.[14] Korean immigrants also participate in the civilian labor force at 61%, which is lower than the 66% of the total foreign-born population.[15] This difference is also apparent within the population of Korean immigrant women, who participate at 53%, compared to the 56% of foreign-born women and 59% of native-born women.[16]

Themes

There were six Korean American focus groups with 46 participants in total. This included two youth, two parent, one community leader, and one service provider focus group. Key themes revealed in the Korean focus groups include the importance of the Korean church, maintaining the family, gender dynamics, and the influence of media on relationships. Additionally, the focus group data also showed that the Korean immigrant experience has contributed to the relationship dynamics within the Korean community in Los Angeles County.

The Korean American church is deeply rooted within the Korean community and can shape the way the Korean community understands intergenerational domestic violence and accesses resources to domestic violence. Christianity is the most common religion among Korean Americans, with 71% identifying as Christian.[17] Our focus groups suggest that the Korean church often acts as a resource hub for the

Korean-speaking community, and the Korean church leaders are seen as community leaders. In addition to community resources, the Korean church was mentioned in the focus groups as a location where participants learn about relationships. While many Korean participants looked to the church to model relationships with their own intimate partners and children, some participants countered that the Korean church also presents unhealthy relationship attributes within relationships in the church.

Among those who attend Korean churches, there seems to be a stigma of discussing sexuality in the Korean community. When sex is discussed, it is within the context of religion and spirituality. Although this finding is specific to members of the Korean church, further discussion with service providers suggests that discussing sex with their children continues to be taboo for Korean parents.

Furthermore, language barriers within the Korean American community contribute to the lack of discussion around such topics. Korean-speaking parents with limited English proficiency feel that their children's ability to speak the Korean language is an

important mechanism to maintain communication and culture in the household. However, maintaining the Korean language for children becomes more difficult as Korean children begin attending school and continue to learn in English. As conversations around gender norms and sexuality require an advanced level of language, Korean parents who want to create a connection with their children and communicate with their children in a healthy manner often have found that they have neither the language capacity nor a model for how to discuss topics of sexuality with their children.

Overall, despite many first-generation Korean immigrants preferring their children to marry other Koreans, there seems to be resignation towards marrying outside of the Korean community, and some Korean parents expressed that they were open to it now that they reside in the US. Many Korean church leaders, however, blame this trend of out-marriage on their inability to model healthy relationships within the Korean community.

Domestic Violence

Findings from the focus groups suggest that the generation of Korean immigrants who moved to the US from the 1960s to 1980s continues to hold onto many of the cultural values held in Korea during those years. One partner staff member attributed the conservative mindset of the older generation of Korean immigrants to a cultural freeze for the Korean community living in Los Angeles County.

The Korean immigrants who migrated during this period tend to hold onto the more conservative views of the time than those who stayed in Korea, whose views have evolved as the country continued to progress forward. Due to their limited English proficiency, older generations of Korean immigrants have continued to be isolated in ethnic enclaves, which can often reinforce similar viewpoints. In a similar way, younger generations are introduced to certain viewpoints through living in these enclaves and being influenced by Korean media, which often romanticizes male aggression. Although participants have mentioned that there are popular Korean shows that have encouraged fathers to be more involved with their children, much of Korean media, such as

dramas and reality TV shows, reinforces traditionally conservative cultural norms and expectations of male authority and female suppression of emotion. This has led to immigrants reinforcing patriarchal values that can often contribute to the domestic violence culture within the Korean family. The "time warp" seems to affect relationships outside of intimate partners and can also be a stressor between in-laws. Traditionally, in Korea, wives moved in with their husband's family after marriage. Living with their in-laws, wives were often treated poorly and tasked to take care of the whole family. This norm still exists, even now in the United States; where husbands fail to maintain balance between their wives and mothers, the wives can be mistreated. For those with limited English proficiency, lack of language access can serve as a barrier for those who are seeking help.

In addition to holding onto conservative views, Korean participants highly valued keeping a family together in the midst of conflict, whether or not it was the healthiest option for the family. Service providers discussed the idea of "jeong," which is a trait that they said was specific to Koreans. "Jeong" was defined in the focus groups as a combination of love and affection with an emphasis on attachment.

> *"Even though there's hardships in that relationship, [jeong is] the stickiness that keeps that relationship going."*
>
> *— Korean Service Provider*

Sacrificial love is also often seen in Korean families as a factor of "jeong," whether that is seen in the form of parents sacrificing for their children, or siblings sacrificing for one another.

I hear parents or mom[s] talk about why they can't leave a very toxic or very terrible [relationship], whether it be from domestic violence or abuse or gambling, addiction, all of that. It's because they're sacrificing that relationship to stay together because of, let's say, the children. I'm sacrificing for the kids. I'm staying in this relationship for my kids …

> *"I feel like a part of that is with the jeong, too. It's because underlying all of that, no matter how hard ... There's still that jeong, that attachment. And so we can't leave, right?"*
>
> *— Korean Service Provider*

The Korean participants understood domestic violence only in the context of physical mistreatment and did not include in it controlling relationships or non-physical violence. Particularly for the older generations, there is a belief that women should tolerate whatever is below the threshold of physical abuse.

As the younger generation of Korean Americans has started to become more economically stable, a service provider explained, they "are allowed the luxury" to worry more about their own individual well-being, while the older generation is still focused on the collective in providing for their family. Another service provider explained that because the Korean immigrant generation's threshold for pain is high, they are more willing to endure difficult and harmful situations, such as domestic violence, to keep the family together. This higher threshold for tolerating pain and discomfort can lead to conflict within the family, as the younger generation may not understand why the older generation is more willing to withstand abuse. This can mean that Koreans, particularly the older Korean immigrants, are less likely to seek help and will endure abuse as long as their family is not separated, often in the name of resilience.

Community Assets

Although Koreans have settled throughout the greater Los Angeles metropolitan region and beyond, with community assets and churches similarly dispersed, there remains a concentration of Korean community-based organizations and faith-based organizations in the Koreatown neighborhood of Los Angeles. Despite the distribution of Koreans throughout Los Angeles, many still turn to Koreatown-based assets for resources such as church, social services, culturally and linguistically competent professional services of all kinds, and recreation.

Korean-specific resources for domestic violence are found in both informal and formal spaces. The informal methods to seeking help usually include speaking with friends, family, or other confidants. The process for seeking help typically starts with information and resources found on the internet when individuals take it upon themselves to take action to resolve a domestic violence issue. If an individual's social network, such as family, friends, or church members, encourages them to seek help, then that person will be more inclined to reach out to organizations that can provide the resources or services.

The client-based services at Koreatown Youth and Community Center (KYCC) and Korean American Family Services (KFAM) are more formal starting points to find connections to resources that are culturally competent and directly attuned to the Korean clients' needs. Another important asset in the Korean community is the church. The faith community not only serves as a resource to address domestic violence but also as a cultural pillar in the Korean community. The leaders in the church may refer individuals who seek their counsel to other organizations and agencies that lie outside the scope of what they can provide. While KYCC and KFAM can provide in-language domestic violence services, there are few other organizations with the same capacity, so other referrals for domestic violence resources are mostly English-speaking. Finally, a Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) intervention prompted by a third-party report also represents a formal access point for domestic and family violence resources.

The barriers to receiving help primarily stem from the inability to communicate openly about domestic violence issues in various capacities. The stigma of sharing personal matters and seeking help outside of the family unit prevents people in the Korean community from receiving help beyond counseling. Because victims are discouraged from opening up to strangers, they may not seek help from community and culturally connected organizations that can provide or connect them to services for financial, housing, or legal support. Moreover, because some trusted figures, such as church leaders, may not appreciate the seriousness of the problem posed by domestic violence, parishioners and other community members may minimize the issue

and not seek further help. Thus, the social dynamics in the Korean community can impede a prevention approach to domestic violence due to denial that a given situation comprises domestic violence or that domestic violence is a problem more generally.

Utilizing the network of resources in the Korean community can be the best means of providing culturally competent services. Creating a space to share and talking openly about the resources that are available for different domestic violence issues also allow for more preventative measures to be taken. The resources, assets, and figures that are most familiar have built trust in the Korean American community and help community members come to acknowledge domestic violence situations and persuade them to seek help.

Conclusion

Relationships within the Korean American community in Los Angeles County are deeply influenced by the church, family, media, and their immigrant experiences. The additional stressors of the immigrant experience, including cultural norms they immigrated with, often force older generations to tolerate higher thresholds of pain to create opportunities for their children and family members. As their descendants continue to navigate these spaces to provide for their children, they no longer tolerate abuse and work to create healthy relationships with their children.

Indian American Community

The Indian American community in the US, as with the other communities examined in this study, is complex in the way it understands, practices, and passes on traditional values and cultural norms. A subset of the larger South Asian community, the North Indian Hindu community has been deeply impacted by the immigration process and resulting cultural adaptation. Many in the community also face the tension of reconciling aspects of Indian culture at their time of immigration and now, a phenomenon known as "cultural freeze."

The largest wave of North Indian Hindu community members arrived as part of the post-1965 migration of highly skilled, highly educated Asian Indian (also known as Indian American) immigrants to the US, entering as doctors, nurses, engineers, and scientists.[18] Many also arrived as highly skilled "guest workers" under the H1-B visa program, started in 1990.[19] These immigrants were mainly from upper caste backgrounds with higher socioeconomic status, were educated as professionals, and emigrated from urban centers in India rather than rural areas. Many of these immigrants had the advantage of knowing and speaking English,[20] which allowed integration into American society with possibly more ease than for other immigrant groups. Not all members of the Indian community fit these characteristics; the community also includes those who have lower caste backgrounds and fewer resources.

> *"Whether it's in India or here, we're raised in a certain way and I think respect is really one of the key things here; that we were just raised to respect people and especially your elders. There are certain relationships that are just supposed to be respected, and it has to do with age."*
>
> *— Indian parent*

Traditional Indian American culture is collectivistic versus individualistic, prioritizing the group over the self in society.[21] This collectivism extends to the family structure as well, with a key feature being the upholding "family unity at expense of individuality, freedom of choice, privacy and personal space."[22] This emphasis on the group, particularly the family unit— which, in traditional Indian families, can include three to four generations living in the same household, —can contribute to both internal and external conflicts when faced with America's more individualistic society and its norm of a nuclear family of parents and children. These joint family units tend to be patriarchal, with the hierarchy of respect and power clearly established under the oldest male relative.

Themes

The Indian American focus groups, three in total--one all-female parent group, one mixed gender parent group, and one mixed gender youth and transitional age youth group--captured a range of perspectives from 22 total participants, all of whom identified as Indian Hindu, primarily from Northern India, but represented diverse backgrounds and experiences. They did not discuss or identify aspects of the Hindu religion outright in their responses; however, Hinduism for many seemed inseparable from what participants referred to as "traditional" Indian culture.

The findings from the focus groups demonstrate the strong influence of culture and family on intimate partner relationships and gender dynamics and provide insights into the parent-child relationship, including the risk and strengthening factors connected to domestic violence. Some of the key themes that emerged from the analysis are the importance of the family structure in determining the power dynamics in the family, the culture shift from "traditional" to "modern" values due to immigration and acculturation to the US, the centrality of the mother in parenting the children, and the desire to create healthy relationships and communication dynamics despite the lack of models to do so.

Participants discussed the importance in Hindu communities of respecting elders, particularly older generations within a family. Elders, especially older men, receive respect and often maintain authority and power within extended families, with older women being secondary. One youth mentioned that it is normal to touch the feet of his grandmother to show respect and ask for blessings. However, since their power comes from being connected to a man, older women, while respected, may not have power in the household if they are widows. This respect and power connection has broad implications on family and relationship dynamics in a culture that emphasizes "family first" and often gives men the final say.

With immigration, there has been a shift from "traditional" (meaning "Indian" and often conservative) to "modern" (meaning "American" or liberal) values, although participants observed that there are those who are more traditional and those who are more modern within the same generation.

> *If the child is bad, we [mothers] get the blame, and if he is good, we get the credit. Mother gives guidance to the child. If the child goes wrong, the mother has to hear it from her husband, in-laws.*
>
> *— Indian parent*

The culture shift within the community depends less on generation and more on the date of immigration and the degree of acculturation. The cultural freeze phenomenon suggests that the Indian norms and values that resonate most with immigrants, even now, are those from the period during which they emigrated. Those who immigrated from lower classes may, however, be more likely to retain "traditional" values due to barriers to acculturation, such as limited English proficiency, and the lack of resources for mobility, and reinforced cultural norms.

The culture shift also affects how the community parents their children. This often manifests as parents wanting to have open communication with their children. Parents place value on education for their daughters in addition to their sons, wanting to provide opportunities for their children that they may not have had growing up. These immigrant parents shared that they want to build trust with their children and not have the traditional hierarchical relationship that they had with their parents. However, youth participants shared that they do not want to talk about certain topics, such as dating and relationships, with their parents. They prefer to talk about these issues with their siblings or friends, people with whom they feel can relate to their experiences, since they are more current or similar. Youth shared that they want their parents to be their parents rather than try to be their friends, and have their parents treat them with respect. They also affirmed the parents' efforts in treating their sons and daughters equally; youth felt that they largely did not have gendered expectations placed on them by their parents.

Even with the culture shift and more gender equality for the children, the expectation and reality are that the mother would take the primary role in parenting

> *"And I think at that point, my mother-in-law was very distraught and upset because it was her son who had suddenly taken someone else's side. But I think if he wouldn't have done that, I don't know. I think I would've still been making rotis or not. I don't know. But it was ... And I think I didn't have the mindset to even question that. I just presumed I had to, to respect her kind of [thinking], and it was her first visit, I was newly married to a family that I didn't know that well. So I just thought 'Oh okay. That's what I guess I have to do,' and then I realized, I don't have to."*
>
> *— Indian parent*

and the father would be less involved, if at all. Youth shared that the main parent they approach when they want to talk is their mother. Traditionally, the cultural norm is for the mother to raise the children, run the household, and hold the family together. Both men and women shared that this is still the case. Due to their primary role in parenting, managing the family, and particularly in raising sons, some participants believed that changing the mother's attitudes could result in changing society and the culture itself from one of male dominance to one of mutual respect.

Domestic Violence

With the Indian culture focused on "family first," significant pressure is placed on mothers both to respect the family hierarchy and to train children on the norms and expectations of that hierarchy. Moreover, within a joint family structure, the mother/wife can feel caught in the middle between her nuclear family and her extended family, including the in-laws. Participants shared that tension and conflict between the mother-in-law and the daughter-in-law are routine and common enough to serve as a regular theme in Indian soap operas. This conflict often stems from unrealistic "traditional" expectations placed on the daughter-in-law, either by the mother-in-law or sometimes by the daughter-in-law herself. The son/

husband is seen as key to pushing back against this power dynamic and restoring balance to the household by supporting his wife against his mother.

Even with the support of strong women in their families, many female participants explained that it was having men in their families who valued and respected women that allowed them to have more opportunities for education, economic advancement, and independent living. In a patriarchal culture, lacking this support meant that women would have to compromise their personal pursuits and ambitions. For instance, women's careers remain less valued than men's careers, and the woman still bears the responsibility of being the family caregiver, even when she has a job outside the home. This finding highlights the critical role that Indian American attitudes towards gender equity has in either strengthening protective factors or exacerbating vulnerabilities to domestic violence.

In addition to these dynamics within the Indian community, the lack of healthy relationship models contributes to a situation with a higher potential for domestic violence. Many of the parent participants stated that growing up they did not see a model of a healthy relationship in their own parents. The understanding within the community that a husband and wife's relationship should be "behind closed

> *"I think that's probably the thing that we didn't mention in this whole conversation about relationships; whether it's with your parents, your child, with your spouse, with your sibling, is that if you don't ... I think the only way you can have a successful relationship with another person in any way, is if my feelings are as important as the other person's feelings, basically. So, I can't have this power thing where I say, 'Well, I'm the man, or I'm the parent, or I'm the this, and therefore, my feelings and thoughts supersede yours,' then all of a sudden I no longer have a healthy relationship."*
>
> *— Indian parent*

doors" leaves spouses without recourse to seek support elsewhere. In the absence of outside models or supports and a strong joint family dynamic, problems can be hidden within the family or exacerbated by interference from in-laws. The lack of modeling of a healthy relationship, including the conflicts inherent in a relationship, can contribute to children not knowing how to recognize a healthy or unhealthy relationship. Some parent participants shared that they had to learn to display affection to each other and model healthy affection for their own children. Many shared that they had never talked about sex with their own parents, with the word treated as taboo. They also did not discuss differences in perspectives and expectations for marriage before they got married. Thus, there is an opportunity to improve understanding between couples and build empathy between the husband and wife.

Conclusion

The Indian community in the US mixes "traditional" Indian culture, including life experience from their own families, and "modern" American culture, as the community acculturates and adapts to the environment around them. As Indian American families become settled, traditional norms around gender equity and empathy in the family are being challenged and transformed, with community implications for both strength in prevention and vulnerability to domestic violence.

Pakistani American Community

The immigration experience of Pakistani Americans to the US provides an interesting narrative of identity and cultural values. The most recent wave of Pakistani immigrants arrived in the US mostly between the 1960s-1980s, already with a university degree and a family unit.[23] They were typically financially stable with incomes sometimes above the median US-born levels.[24] During this time, those in this immigrant generation began to contend with and in some cases acculturate to the more individualistic norms in the US.[25]
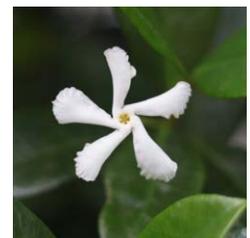
After 9/11, the profiling of Muslim, Arab, and South Asian communities in the US drove Pakistani Americans to rely more heavily on traditional community and cultural norms to create a sense of pride and remembrance of the good that was in their culture.[26] However, this effort also created problems, drawing the ridicule and persecution of bigoted Americans, and some Pakistanis were driven to disassociate themselves from their cultural identity to assimilate to an acceptable cultural identity.[27] In this way, Pakistanis in America have had to struggle with expressing multiple different cultural identities, which also has meant grappling with defining and addressing multiple different sets of cultural norms.

As such, the interaction between Pakistani and American culture presents a unique convergence of relationships and cultural values. Each wave of immigrants to the US has adopted American cultural values to different degrees, and, depending on how long they have lived in America, Pakistanis practice their adapted values differently. There are generational differences in parenting-styles, gender dynamics within the community and the family, and differences in the family's role in establishing relationships. Some of these differences may reflect variations in generation or age, while others can be attributed to the varying levels of religious devotion in their lives. While these findings look at the groups of Pakistani American participants as a whole, it is important to note that there are cultural differences within each group that were not fully captured that can lead to more diverse expressions of these key themes.

Themes

The Pakistani American focus groups in this study consisted of a mixed gender youth group, an all-female parents' group, and a mixed gender service provider/community leader group. Each focus group spoke strongly about relationship dynamics in connection with family and cultural dynamics. Some of the key themes that tie these dynamics together are male dominance, the centrality of Islam within the family and the community, and the dependence of healthy parent-child relationships on strong communication.

Male dominance is central in the Pakistani culture and is at the core of family culture in the form of gender dynamics and how relationship dynamics are communicated. The equality of love, respect, and power in Pakistani culture reinforces male dominance and patriarchal norms. The father is deemed the head of the family who holds the most love and requires the utmost respect. In the family, children show they love their parents by giving them unquestionable respect and deference, which establishes the family power structure. Since men are expected to take care of the family financially, they have the final word on decisions within the family. Women in Pakistan work, take care of the children and husband, and serve as the backbone of the household ensuring that it is in order. While women are tasked with ensuring the stability of families, they do not hold the same power that the men do as head of the family.

Recently, there has been a shift toward thinking of gender dynamics with more equity and less from the perspective of male dominance. Some participants noted that seeing more gender equity between a mother and father can help change the unhealthy power dynamics in the family. Youth reported learning

about healthy relationships from their parents showing that both can work and take care of the family and household chores. Gender equity was found to be more about both members of the relationship making decisions together. Healthy communication between women and men, where both felt heard, was also found to be important in establishing healthy relationships. Although relationships within Pakistani families are shaped by love, respect, and power, ultimately these are all understood through a religious lens at the core of Pakistani families and culture.

Religion is at the center of the Pakistani family and community and is important in understanding the ebbs and flows of relationships. Respondents generally spoke of their overall community as the overseers that keep watch on what is happening with the community, while also monitoring parents and the children individually. The key players who monitor community goings-on include the imam, respected community elders, and neighbors. These people uphold cultural and religious values and serve as a resource to advise parents and youth in the community. These highly regarded voices of the community enforce Islamic teachings, which are understood to have the answers on how to live a healthy life.

Parent respondents spoke of Islam being a religion of structure, which is very important to incorporate in child discipline. The community outside of the family has such a powerful voice that parents often make decisions about their parenting based on fear of the community judging them and their family negatively. If the community feels the child is not being raised in a way that they deem acceptable, then parents report feeling isolated from the community, which in some cases has harmful effects on the parent-child dynamics in the family. When youth respondents reflected on the importance of Islam, there were some who felt proud to have their religion shape their lives, while others only abide by it as a sign of respect for their parents.

Sometimes the strict influence of Islam in a household made youth respondents feel they could not openly communicate with their parents. Youth who had problems connecting with Islam felt that they must lead two different lives, presenting one identity to their family and another outside of the Pakistani community. There was collective agreement that while Islam is very ingrained in the Pakistani-Muslim family culture, there

is also room for questioning Islamic teachings, and automatic acceptance without curiosity is not required. The openness to being inquisitive has been expressed as leading to healthier parent-child relationships.

> *"I still firmly believe that if you teach them right and wrong in Islam, and you make it a point to make your house a very strict... not strict, but strict but open Muslim environment, Islamic environment, they will automatically come to you with whatever issues that they have. You can't just tell them, 'Okay, this is what Islam teaches you.' It does teach you this, but at the same time you have to tell them that, 'Okay, if you're confused, ask Allah. And if you have other issues that are going on in your head, feel comfortable to come to me about it. Don't hide things from me. Don't get involved in peer pressure.'"*
>
> *— Pakistani Community Leader*

Healthy Pakistani parent-child relationships revolve around the ability of both parents and children to communicate openly and to demonstrate and learn what a healthy relationship looks like between parents. The mother-child relationship is embedded in Pakistani culture, with the mother more commonly the parent whom children go to for advice or to have needs met. Because mothers are primarily responsible for parenting the children, they are also responsible for ensuring children turn out right in the eyes of the family and the community. The mother thus has the additional pressure to manage both the affairs of the family internally and the appearances of the family outwardly.

Family reputation is another important theme at the core of the Pakistani American family dynamics and reflects a collectivist nature instead of the individualism that is commonly associated with American culture. The collectivist versus individualist mentality reflects a generational divide in immigrant families and occasionally causes a rift in the parent and child relationship. For instance, arranged marriages, which

are still very prominent in Pakistani American culture, reflect a collectivist orientation towards prioritizing family needs rather than the more individualist approach to seeking a fulfilling personal romantic relationship. Parents may insist on arranging a marriage for their children, while children express desires to date whom they want and exercise the independence to which they see their peers accustomed.

> *"So, he didn't want to make a public scene, which is understandable. And that to me is important. My husband always says if we get in a little argument in the car, 'Why are you saying this now? Just keep it cool and we'll talk about it later. It's not a big deal. Don't ruin the day for everybody else.'"*
>
> *— Pakistani Community Leader*

When expressing their desires for relationships and dating, youth prefer to talk to their siblings and cousins instead of their parents or elders because open communication is generally not supported in Pakistani culture. The family and social constraints on communication and life decision-making result in youth feeling like they must live two different lives. Some parents recognize this and spoke of not offering their advice before they are asked for fear that they will push their children to not confide in them.

There are additional barriers to communication between children and their fathers. Participants described the lack of affection as a factor that undermines confidence. Some participants spoke of fathers changing their parenting style to make more time to bond with their children. However, this shift in approach is not a widespread norm within the community.

Domestic Violence

The means by which Pakistani parents teach their children about healthy and unhealthy relationships are very important. Some parents have conversations about when their children can and cannot date, while others feel that modeling a healthy partnership helps teach about healthy relationships. Ultimately, most parents agreed that they want their children to be in a relationship with someone who understands their culture and is accepting of the religion they practice.

> *"And, because that's what my mom always told me, to like, keep your distance, but if you like them, and all that, and they like you, then you have to tell them about your religion, and hopefully they're going to have to understand, they have to understand your culture and your religion without ridiculing it."*
>
> *— Pakistani Youth*

Domestic violence, for the most part, was not directly discussed within any of the focus groups. However, one topic that reflected risks for unhealthy relationships was the practice of keeping parental disputes secret and away from the children. Some parents described their upbringing and how they did not see their parents argue or fight because their parents said that was unhealthy for the kids to witness. Others noted that parental arguments were not the children's business, and there was fear that the kids would talk about parental disputes outside of the family's home, risking the positive and wholesome family image.

The protection of the family image emerges as a risk factor for domestic violence in other ways as well, such as parents being more willing to stay in violent circumstances to preserve the family unit. The choice to stay is sometimes easier, as divorce is looked down upon by the family and the community as a whole. Because there is limited communication about issues within the family, children are largely shielded from learning how to effectively handle familial problems and marital disputes. As a result, they lack knowledge on how to change an unhealthy dispute into healthy communication. Lacking this exposure, knowledge, and skill risks youth perpetuating these behaviors in their own relationships and eventually their future family dynamics.

Conclusion

The cultural dynamics of the Pakistani American community in Los Angeles County are intricately intertwined with family structure, which ultimately dictates how relationships are formed and navigated. Additionally, incorporating religious considerations into life choices is perceived as a way of guiding members of the Pakistani American community to living life in keeping with community values. Although individual community members communicate, receive, and enact the teachings of Islam in different ways and to different degrees of devotion, the teachings offer guidance to much more than living a religious life. Relationships within the community and the family are grounded in Islamic teachings, as are the patriarchal norms upon which familial power dynamics are structured. Despite the rigidity of the traditions that define the structure and operations of the family, there is evidence of a cultural shift that allows for different and more equitable parenting styles. These new family dynamics offer a learning experience for Pakistani youth and new opportunities for domestic violence prevention for future generations.

Indian & Pakistani Community Assets

The South Asian community in Southern California, for the purpose of this study, consists of the North Indian Hindu and Pakistani Muslim communities. While these communities are found in various cities throughout Los Angeles County, many community resources are located in the southeastern Los Angeles County communities of Cerritos and Artesia, the coastal communities of Long Beach and Palos Verdes, and Metro Los Angeles, where there is also a sizeable Bangladeshi community. Although there are a multitude of Indian and Pakistani-specific community assets throughout the region, many community-based service providers serve multiple South Asian communities, which is why the groups are combined in this section. South Asian Network (SAN) serves clients from a diversity of South Asian backgrounds.

Although the Los Angeles North Indian Hindu and Pakistani Muslim communities have distinct cultural traditions and languages, both groups have similar methods for accessing domestic violence resources and experience similar barriers. Due to the taboo nature of the subject matter, and the risks involved for both women and organizations involved in domestic violence situations, prevention and intervention resources are generally provided anonymously or in secret. Community-based organizations commonly conduct outreach for domestic violence services by posting flyers. When victims actively search for help regarding a domestic violence situation, information and connections are often provided via word of mouth. Additionally, many community leaders and service providers have been trained to identify signs of domestic violence and can discreetly facilitate connections to resources. In some cases, women leverage long-established cultural traditions to share resources and provide peer support. For example, in the Pakistani community, Halaqa Dars are communal gatherings where women from the community convene to create a safe space to discuss issues they cannot otherwise openly address.

Both Indian and Pakistani communities utilize both culturally tailored and community supported resources, as well as mainstream resources with less cultural competency. While social support services, including counseling, support groups, and parenting groups, as well as mental health services are impactful, the domestic violence services most commonly sought from both North Indian Hindu and Pakistani Muslim individuals are legal representation, shelter or housing, and financial stability resources.

The direct service and referral providers endeavor to find resources for victims based on their specific needs. Oftentimes, individuals are referred to pan-Asian and mainstream services, which may have more robust capacity to provide domestic violence intervention assistance than smaller culturally competent community organizations. In some cases, these services may lack the capacity to provide culturally or linguistically competent services, which can present a barrier to addressing clients' specific needs. However, some South Asian service providers have established a network of trusted mainstream service providers, or specific provider staff, who have gained experience working with Indian and Pakistani clients and become more familiar with their cultural norms.

One of the principal barriers to accessing services involve community power dynamics that cultivate silence around domestic violence issues. In most cases, women will wait to seek help until the children are threatened or until DCFS is notified at the child's school. Additionally, there are powerful narratives in both Indian and Pakistani communities that normalize violence, power, and control in the household. For this reason, preventative approaches to domestic violence have limited opportunities to take hold, and as a result, women often do not seek help until the circumstances have progressed to a critical tipping point.

Limitations

Limitations

As seen in the findings, there are many differences across these five communities, as well as within each one. There were a variety of challenges to conducting this study, including the diversity of the communities, languages spoken, the short timeframe, and the stigma with which the subject matter is perceived in the five communities. This study represents a snapshot of a select subset of five local communities in Los Angeles County, and understanding the spectrum of views within each community is limited based on the participants recruited.

The term "AAPI" is overly broad and collapses multiple Asian American and Pacific Islander ethnic groups, as well as the diaspora resulting from multiple migration histories, into one racial group. The term was created originally as a government designation and then later reclaimed for political representation, and the use of it often contributes to the erasure of already-invisible groups. For example, even though "PI" is included in the "AAPI" label, this study did not conduct focus groups in any of the Pacific Islander (PI) communities and should not be seen as representing the PI perspective. In addition, participants were recruited from a convenience sample by each of the community partners, from groups with which they were already working, who were primarily in

heterosexual relationships. Thus, participants do not represent the vast diaspora of each Asian American community in this study, with its range of immigration characteristics, such as year of immigration, conditions of immigration, and individual characteristics at immigration. As such, the findings are limited to the experiences and perspectives of a few: 163 individuals across the 23 focus groups, with a minimum of three and a maximum of eleven individuals in any single focus group.

During the course of this study, the research team also encountered multiple issues with the planning and logistics for conducting the focus groups and the subsequent data cleaning and analysis given the short and ambitious timeframe. In the span of less than a year, the study team, in conjunction with the partners who have the cultural expertise about the communities, planned the study, designed the materials, recruited and scheduled the focus groups, conducted data collection, and completed the analysis in five different communities. There was a benefit in having multiple partners to advise and provide feedback on materials, but there were also issues with managing the feedback and ensuring version control, especially when some words and concepts do not translate the same across all communities.

There were six documents developed in English: an informed consent/assent form, a parental consent letter for youth, a demographic questionnaire, and three separate focus group protocols (youth, parents, service provider/community leader). Each of these six documents had to be translated into five languages (Chinese, Hindi, Khmer, Korean, and Urdu). Given the diversity within each community, there were challenges with what words should be used to translate "intimate relationships" as well as the more technical language of the research study script for informed consent. The study team made efforts to simplify the language in all study documents and study protocols for ease of translation and facilitation within the focus groups. For example, instead of having a separate informed assent form for the youth participants, the study team developed a simplified informed consent/assent form that could be used for both adult and youth participants.

Each community partner and community had specific considerations and constraints, which further affected the study timeline. Some partner staff had no experience with facilitating focus groups, particularly on a sensitive topic like domestic violence. As a result, the SSG R&E team, in coordination with Center for the Pacific Asian Family (CPAF), provided training on focus group facilitation on this subject matter. Limited staff capacity among partners made it difficult to coordinate schedules for staffing focus groups; and then sudden cancellations and no-shows by recruited participants often meant rescheduling focus groups, further extending the focus group timeframe. In turn, this shortened the period for data cleaning and analysis and meant having to move forward with a more limited scope of perspectives.

Lastly, with the sensitive subject matter, there were multiple decisions made to ensure the ethical nature and integrity of the research process for the participants. With the short timeframe for the study, the study team was not able to submit the study for review and approval by an Institutional Review Board (IRB). An IRB review process would have enabled careful consideration of the risks and benefits of the study for participants. In the absence of such a review, the study team took extra measures to respect and protect study participants, building in an informed consent process that discussed the possible risks,

however minimal, and the limited individual benefits. This process involved deciding how to present the issue of "mandated reporting" connected to information that participants possibly disclosed regarding abuse, either as recipients or perpetrators. The informed consent script provided opportunity for participants to use pseudonyms instead of their real names in introductions, and facilitators received guidance to mention and then remind focus group participants that staff were mandated reporters. This helped to ensure that participants did not accidentally reveal more than they intended, which might put them in a risky situation. Also, the study team made the choice to frame the research study as a discussion on "Cultural Ideas and Practices around Relationships in AAPI Communities," to reduce the stigma associated with participating in the study, as well as to avoid focusing the discussion on specific domestic violence incidences.

Conclusion

Conclusion

This community needs assessment explored the varied and unique ways that Asian American communities draw upon sociocultural norms, attitudes, beliefs, and community experiences to inform an intergenerational life course framework for domestic violence. Each community expressed distinct norms around gender roles, family and relationship dynamics, and the way that cultural and immigration backgrounds inform them.

This study also revealed some critical cross-cultural findings common among the five communities, including the interrelatedness of intergenerational dynamics with immigration experience, the role of marriage in a community, the contrast between community and family expectations, and the importance of a strong female presence in the household for gender equity. All these findings will inform the individual and collective work of the project partners, particularly for implementing future prevention and intervention efforts in AAPI communities.

Furthermore, this study helped the collaborative to define a vision, articulate goals, and craft recommendations for the long-term effort to implement a culturally attuned AAPI-focused intergenerational life course framework. As such, Blue Shield of California Foundation's investment in A3PCON, a coalition of AAPI service providers in Los Angeles County, and CPAF's innovative domestic violence prevention model helps drive forward this important multi-ethnic-intergenerational work.

Acknowledgments

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Endnotes

[1] *"AAPI" is a catchall term inclusive of dozens of Asian American and Pacific Islander ethnic and linguistic groups and is commonly used in service provision contexts. However, it is important to note that this study included participants from only five Asian American communities and did not include any Pacific Islanders. This study cannot claim to represent all Asian American and Pacific Islander communities.*

[2] *U.S. Census Bureau; American Community Survey, 2011-2015 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Table B01003.*

[3] *Takei, I., & Sakamoto, A. (2011). Poverty among Asian Americans in the 21st century. Sociological perspectives, 54(2), 251-276.*

[4] *U.S. Census Bureau; American Community Survey, 2017 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates, Table S0201.*

[5] *The state-sponsored mass killings of between 20 and 40% of the Cambodian population under the Khmer Rouge regime.*

[6] *U.S. Census Bureau; American Community Survey, 2017 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates, Table S0201.*

[7] *Ibid.*

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[12] *Ibid.*

[13] *Ibid.*

[14] *Ibid.*

[15] *Ibid.*

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[24] *Ibid.*

[25] *[Khaleque, Malik and Rohner, 2015].*

[26] *[Moore, 2011].*

[27] *Ibid.*

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