



Training Curriculum

**I.**

# **DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AGAINST ASIAN & PACIFIC ISLANDER WOMEN**

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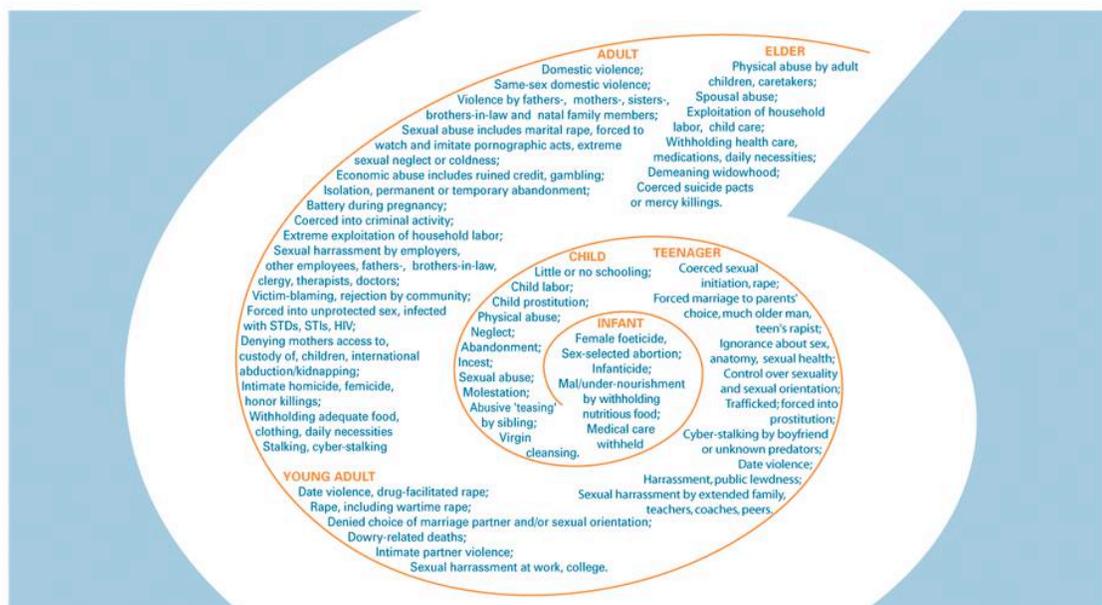
# 1. VIOLENCE OVER THE LIFECOURSE

## a. Lifetime Spiral of Gender Violence

The Lifetime Spiral of Gender Violence describes the potential for violence across the female lifespan – confined to one or continuing into several stages in the lifecycle. Violence against women is more than physical, sexual, economic, and emotional abuse; it is also about living in a climate of fear, misery, loss, mistrust, humiliation, and despair. The lives of abused Asian and Pacific Islander women are shadowed by the cultural burdens of shame and devaluation. Gender violence can be experienced in the context of additional oppressions based on race, ethnicity, age, sexual orientation, gender identity, type of labor being performed, level of education, class position, immigration/refugee status or disability. Women are invited to use this spiral to identify histories of abuse in their own lives or in the lives of family and friends in order to raise everyone's awareness about the historical nature of gender violence and to diminish victim-blaming.

→ Refer trainees to handout

## Lifetime Spiral of Gender Violence



## **b. Discussion Question for Trainees**

### → Discuss

Identify ways to use the Lifetime Spiral of Gender Violence in:

- your work with battered women
- other types of advocacy work if you are not a service provider
- training others in the domestic violence field
- training community members
- community organizing work

### → Call out

Individuals call out how they have used or could use the Lifetime Spiral of Gender Violence in their work.

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## 2. DYNAMICS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AGAINST API WOMEN

### a. High prevalence rates

Forty one to sixty percent of Asian women report experiencing physical and/or sexual violence by an intimate partner during their lifetime.<sup>1</sup> This is higher than the prevalence rate for other groups: Whites (21.3%), African-Americans (26.3%), Hispanic of any race (21.2%), mixed race (27.0%), and American Indians and Alaskan Natives (30.7%).<sup>2</sup> It is also higher than the 12.8% rate reported for Asians and Pacific Islanders in the same national survey, which may be attributed to under-reporting arising from language and socio-cultural barriers.

### b. Distinguishing dynamics, patterns, and types

Domestic violence in Asian communities has some different patterns, forms and dynamics of abuse. While trying to show a complex picture of what is happening in Asian families, we want to avoid stereotyping them. There are similarities between all battered women's experiences; these are not enumerated here. Some of the dynamics Asian women describe may be particular to only certain ethnic groups some may be common to many of them. However, there are two distinguishing dynamics:

- **Multiple Batterers** in the home, particularly male and female in-laws.
- **Push & Pull Factors** where women experience being pushed out of the relationship

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<sup>1</sup>Asian Pacific Institute on Gender-based Violence *Fact Sheet on Domestic Violence in Asian Communities*. This figure is derived from community-based studies in different Asian ethnic groups in the U.S. The low end of the range is from a study by A. Raj and J. Silverman, Intimate partner violence against South-Asian women in Greater Boston *J Am Med Women's Assoc.* 2002; 57(2): 111-114. The high end of the range is from a study by M. Yoshihama, Domestic violence against women of Japanese descent in Los Angeles: Two methods of estimating prevalence. *Violence Against Women.* 1999; 5(8): 869-897. Oakland: Author, 2005 (Revised).

<sup>2</sup> Tjaden P., and Thoennes N. *Extent, Nature and Consequences of Intimate Partner Violence: Research Report*. Washington, DC: National Institute of Justice and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; 2000.

- or the family home, sometimes more frequently than they are pulled or enticed back
- into the relationship.



#### NOTE TO TRAINERS:

1. The API-specific enumeration **below** is meant to be reviewed briefly. Select 1 or 2 items per section based on the extent of your knowledge and experience.
2. Enumerate issues and select examples relevant to the ethnic groups trainees serve.
3. For a pan-Asian trainee audience, build your repertoire of examples from several groups, not just the one you come from. Using examples from 1 or 2 ethnic groups can give the impression that domestic violence is not a problem in other communities.
4. Include examples beyond ethnicity - about people with disabilities, from lesbian, gay, bi-sexual, transgender communities, etc.

#### *Physical Abuse Can Include*

- Battering by multiple abusers in the extended family home can include mothers-in-law, fathers-in-law, brothers-in-law, sisters-in-law, ex-wives, new wives, adult siblings, and/or members of a woman's natal family;
- Intensive surveillance, cyber-stalking, monitoring activities and visitors, exercising abusive controls from afar utilizing multiple technologies;
- Withholding food, healthcare, medication, adequate clothing, and hygiene products like soap, shampoo, etc;
- Immediate abandonment in the home involves leaving a new wife in her country of origin without any means of contact because the husband leaves a false address, or in the U.S., filing for divorce within a few months of marriage;
- Hyper-exploitation of women's household labor to serve all members of the extended family; and

- Homicides that encompass a broader range of deaths than murder by an intimate, including honor killings, contract killings, dowry or bride price related deaths, killing of family members in the home country, or being driven by one's husband and in-laws into committing suicide.



#### TRAINER'S NOTATIONS:

#### *Emotional Abuse Can Include*

- 'Push' factors out of the relationship from a husband and his family more frequently than 'pull' factors back into the relationship;
- Tightly prescribed and more rigid gender roles for women and men;
- Severe isolation by inhibiting contact with family in the home country and other support systems;
- Using religion to justify domestic violence and to threaten loss of children, social status, financial support and community;
- Pressure from the natal family to stay in the marriage and tolerate the abuse; and
- Silencing battered women and blaming them for bringing dishonor to the family because of the strong nexus of shame and public disclosure.



#### TRAINER'S NOTATIONS:

### *Sexual Abuse Can Include*

- Excessive restrictions designed to control women's sexuality, grave threats about being sexually active;
- Blaming victims for rape, incest or coerced sex, being forced to marry a rapist;
- Denying the right to choose or express a different sexual orientation;
- Being forced to watch and imitate pornography;
- Coercion into unprotected sex which could result in sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV/AIDS;
- Extreme sexual neglect and coldness;
- Sexual harassment not only from co-workers, but from family members, community leaders, clergymen, etc.;
- Forced marriages (not to be confused with arranged marriages) to unknown and generally much older men – marital rape is exacerbated in such situations;
- Ignorance about sex, sexual health and anatomy; and
- Sexual violence in home countries and attendant unresolved trauma can be used by batterers to demean, reject, silence, blame or further violate their intimate partners. These experiences particularly affect refugee and immigrant women who may have been raped in war zones, refugee camps, on unsafe immigration routes or because they were cultural or religious minorities in their home countries, e.g., Muslim women raped in (predominantly Hindu) Gujarat, India or Shan women raped by Burmese militias.



#### TRAINER'S NOTATIONS:

### *Abuse of Women Who Are Mothers Can Include*

- Forced abortions, sex-selected abortions when the fetus is female, or multiple, repeated pregnancies to bear sons in the family;
- False reports and accusations by batterers intended to cause mothers to lose custody of their children. This is achieved by manipulating social service, child protection, immigration, child custody, and criminal and civil legal systems to the advantage of the batterer and his family; and
- Using culture and cultural norms to separate mothers from their children by sending children to paternal grandparents in the home country, abducting/ kidnapping the couple's children and returning to the batterer's home country, stigmatizing divorced mothers and gaining custody based on cultural beliefs that children belong to their father.



TRAINER'S NOTATIONS:

### *Same-Sex, Same-Gender Domestic Violence Can Include*

- Greater threats associated with outing a partner in communities where homosexuality is ostracized.



TRAINER'S NOTATIONS:

### *Abuse Based on Immigration Status Can Include*

- Making false declarations to I.C.E. (formerly INS) about a partner's immigration status, claiming that she entered into a fraudulent marriage, and/or not proceeding with (green card) applications to regularize a spouse's status;
- Threats of deportation if she reports domestic violence;
- Withholding or hiding passports and other important documents;
- Being forced to accept a husband's existing relationships in the U.S. After marriage in the home country women sometimes have to contend with their husband's existing heterosexual or homosexual partner. The new wife's vulnerable immigration status forces her to accept whatever arrangements he insists upon;
- Trans-national abandonment, whereby untraceable husbands return alone to the U.S. on the pretext of filing immigration papers, a practice referred to as "marry-and-dump"; and
- Relationships contracted through International Marriage Bureaus that become abusive because batterers serially marry and entrap women from other countries or abandon them after their fiancé visa expires within 3 months of arrival in the U.S.



#### TRAINER'S NOTATIONS:

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### *Isolating Socio-Cultural Barriers by Batterers, Systems & Communities*

- Systems barriers facing immigrant women, their lack of familiarity with systems and resources in the U.S., and community attitudes towards them are exploited by batterers and incorporated into their abuse;
- Women, particularly non-citizens and those with limited English proficiency face language, economic, racial, cultural, religious, professional, and/or identity-based barriers to social and legal services;
- The strong nexus of public disclosure and shame in many Asian communities is a barrier against seeking help;
- Covert or overt support and the lack of sanctions that accrue to batterers increase their impunity and entitlement to violence; and
- Community attitudes reinforce domestic violence by utilizing victim-blaming, silencing, shaming and rejecting battered women who speak up or seek help.



#### TRAINER'S NOTATIONS:

#### → Call out

Call out examples of other abuses (not enumerated above) and if they apply to a particular API group.

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### 3. MULTIPLE BATTERERS AND THE IMPACT ON VICTIMS/SURVIVORS

#### a. Multiple Batterers

Asian women from various, though not all, ethnic groups can experience violence from multiple batterers in the home.

- Perpetrators can include a husband, mother, father, sister, and/or brother-in-law, the partner's or husband's ex-wife or new wife, other members of his extended family and sometimes hers as well.
- Multiple batterers can act separately and/or they may each use different types of abuse, e.g., emotional and sexual abuse by the husband is accompanied by the mother-in-law's physical violence.
- Multiple batterers can act together, e.g., the brother-in-law and the sister-in-law hold the victim down and the father-in-law beats her.
- Sometimes, there may be no physical violence by in-laws, but they are hyper-vigilant and exert excessive power and control over all her movements. Though they refrain from violence, they actively encourage spouse abuse.
- Power and control can also be exerted from afar through a variety of technologies e.g., mother-in-law sends multiple text messages to her daughter-in-law with detailed instructions about what to make for dinner. Then she also sends messages to her son instructing him to monitor her behavior or check that she followed the dinner-making instructions.



#### NOTE TO TRAINERS

1. Clarify that this dynamic does not occur in all Asian groups, nor does it always happen to everyone in a particular ethnic group.
2. Protect confidentiality by using composite case examples, even if the cases are quite some time in the past.

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## b. Impact on Victims/Survivors

- Women receive a greater number of injuries from multiple batterers.
- There may be almost no cycle of violence or a very feeble one. With multiple batterers, there would be multiple cycles, which means that the woman may not be able to anticipate the violence and therefore, she is less able to take self-protective steps like avoiding the kitchen where there are many dangers.
- Internalized victim-blaming is deeper because several family members blame the victim/survivor for the violence and/or they support other batterers who blame her.
- Internalized devaluation is driven deeper because there is more than one person saying things like, "You deserve this" or "you're worthless".
- Greater family collusion accompanies multiple abusers. Other women in the home may not automatically be allies or friends. E.g., family members may lie, claiming that the victim/survivor was trying to commit suicide and they were trying to stop her.
- Uncomprehending systems are likely to respond inadequately. Given their lack of understanding about multiple batterers, police, health professionals, courts, etc., often do not respond properly. E.g., if the sister-in-law appears at the door with another male family member, police officers unaware of these dynamics will believe her claims that everything is alright and leave without making an intervention.
- Diminished credibility is afforded to battered women by systems, families, and their own communities. This is compounded when her reports include abuse by several family members. Advocates and systems personnel may have difficulty believing that there are several batterers in the home.
- Battered women may be viewed as denying, minimizing or not cooperating about a domestic violence incident because investigative questions assume that the intimate partner is the batterer. E.g., a police officer may think a battered woman is protecting her husband by saying he didn't harm her, whereas in fact her physical injuries may have been caused by her in-laws.



## TRAINER'S NOTATIONS:

### c. Discussion Questions for Trainees

→ Pick 1-2 questions for discussion at your table

*15 minutes*

Given the possibility of multiple batterers in the home, discuss how your advocacy work would be different. In the Call-Out, tell us what you would **directly say to a client or system representative**. Focus your discussion accordingly.

- If you are providing direct services:
  - a. What clues will alert you to possibility of multiple batterers?
  - b. Should you note multiple batterers in the client's file? Why and why not?
  - c. Design a question for the intake form at your agency.
  
- If you are making a systems intervention:
  - a. What would you say in your contact with other systems about the implications of multiple male and female batterers? Consider systems such as law enforcement, restraining order clinics, courts, child welfare system, probation, etc.

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## → Call out

*15 minutes*

- Trainer asks above questions and trainees call out responses without reporting the discussion at the table.
- An example of a systems intervention is: "Alert a child welfare worker who is stipulating to a battered mother that the batterer has to leave the home to avoid child removal, that the in-laws in the home may intensify the violence against the mother and put the child at further risk. Hence, alternate strategies/case plans need to be designed by domestic violence and child welfare advocates".



### NOTE TO TRAINERS

1. Set the tone for Call Out to be brisk, not repetitive and attention-grabbing.
2. Cut off remarks like "at our table we started... etc."
3. Insist that people state what they would say directly to a client or system representative.
4. The purpose is to increase awareness of a range of implications, rather than to have a perfectly crafted intervention.

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## 4. PUSH AND PULL FACTORS: IMPLICATIONS FOR LEAVING

### a. Push and Pull

The terms push and pull factors are used to explain immigration and refer to negative circumstances (such as joblessness or religious persecution) and positive attractions (such as a brighter future for children's education) that motivate people to move to a new place or country. We have borrowed this term to reflect the dynamics many women face in abusive relationships.

Generally, battered women's experiences with pull factors are well understood. After an episode of violence, a batterer may apologize, promise to change, be contrite, offer to amend behaviors like drinking, express how much he needs his partner, that she is the only one who understands and loves him, etc. These may be experienced by the abuser and by the abused as deeply felt emotions or further exercises in power and control, or both. We call these 'pull' factors, because they *pull* the battered partner back into the relationship, offering or luring her with promises to change and giving her the reassurance she seeks.

However, batterers also exercise 'push' factors – telling a partner how terrible she is, how he can find someone else, that she'd be nothing without him, etc. Such statements we refer to as 'push' factors because they are meant to *push* her out of the relationship, rather than draw her back in. Certainly, push and pull factors exist side by side and in sequence in many battering relationships.

Asian battered women describe to advocates how 'push' factors out of the relationship are exerted by abusive partners with statements like "leave the house", "give me a divorce", "I can always find another wife". This can happen more frequently than attempts to 'pull' her back into the relationship, with statements like "come back to me, I won't do it again". Batterers may exert push factors in arranged marriages or forced marriages by iterating that because they did not select their partner, she matters even less to them (e.g., "I didn't even chose you, my parents did"). The presence of push factors and statements does not imply that abusive partners are not

troubled by or sorry for their violence. They are and they do express remorse, love and apology. However, if pull factors dominate in an abusive relationship, these dynamics and narratives have to be taken into account.

## **b. Dynamics of Leaving**

Shelter and many social services for battered women are predicated on leaving; permanently or temporarily separating the victim and abuser and supporting the former in the process. Push and pull factors have several implications on how advocates understand leaving and women's agency or self-determination; about 'decisions' to stay or leave; how often, if at all, women go back; if they leave with or without their children; and how dangers connected to post-separation violence and the loss of children and financial support are assessed.

Advocacy that focuses on abused women leaving without adequately understanding the *dynamics* of leaving doesn't serve battered women well. Advocates who expect women to make one definitive move such as go to a shelter and from there on stay on a trajectory of leaving their abuser, get frustrated and may subtly alter their supportive stance toward a woman they are working with.

- Leaving is a process, not merely a single decision or a single step to taking action; therefore we refer to the *dynamics* of leaving.
- The fact that women leave several times before making a final decision to separate or not, attests to the dynamics of push and pull factors. This can also affect how many times battered women do go back and more push factors may mean that she goes back fewer times.
- Leaving is equated with independence, which is highly valued in American culture, whereas dependence is considered problematic. But independence, inter-dependence, and dependence as interrelated, rather than absolute actions or positions.
- Dependency is part of the journey to independence, so battered women's dependence and inter-dependence on advocates is an important step in the leaving process.

- For Asian, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander women living in extended families there are many more players, thus, many more dynamics involved.



### TRAINER'S NOTATIONS:

### c. Implications for Advocacy

The issues mentioned below are based on experiences and observations of API advocates, but all of them need further study to be understood more clearly. The implications described below are not categorical recommendations and should be treated with caution. They are meant to increase awareness of push and pull factors and to deepen how service providers understand women's decisions, actions or inaction. By clarifying issues affecting Asian and Pacific Islander battered women, our advocacy becomes more culturally sensitive.

- **Push & pull factors affect decisions.** Battered women's autonomy is equated with a decision to leave. If she can't make that decision she is seen as lacking in self-determination. However, push and pull factors affect her 'decisions'. Women experiencing more push factors will not be in a position to make decisions and this is more so the case if multiple batterers are exercising push factors. It can also mean that when a woman does leave, the push factors have become severe, and/or that she is pushed to return to her country of origin. Such outcomes can frustrate advocates providing social and legal services to ensure safe separation.
  - ◆ **Recommendation:** Assess the severity of push and pull factors and incorporate them into safety planning.

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- **Reactions to separation differ when only push factors operate.** Battered women who have been pushed out of the relationship with very little or no space to make their own decisions will react differently to separation than women who have made decisions to leave based on a combination of push and pull factors.
    - ◆ **Recommendation:** Consider this in determining the kinds of emotional, post-separation support a battered woman will need from her advocates.
  
  - **Issues about children are influenced by push factors.** Push factors also govern battered women's decisions about leaving with or without their children. An extended family may be pushing her out so hard that she may leave without her kids, planning to return for them, not realizing that this will not happen because the family plans to keep her children, even if they have given her assurances to the contrary. What may look like an inexplicable decision to advocates to leave without her children, could in fact be a function of push factors exerted by multiple batterers.
    - ◆ **Recommendation:** Include children early on in safety planning, discuss possible scenarios and jointly develop a safety plan that includes children.
  
  - **Post-separation violence and push-pull factors.** Even if a woman is being 'pushed' out, the leaving process may still be violent and followed by threats in an attempt to maintain her silence. If *both* the husband and in-laws push her and her children out, that could mean less danger of post-separation violence. This may not be the case if only one party is pushing her out. However, this is an area needing greater study.
    - ◆ **Recommendation:** Assess dangers connected to post-separation violence in light of whether a batterer and/or the extended family applied more push than pull factors.
  
  - **Kids may play a role in leaving & help-giving.** Although much mention is made in the domestic violence field of children identifying with the abuser, there is growing anecdotal evidence of the roles that young children and teens play in supporting their abused mothers. For example, an 8 year old who had a resource card from a local domestic violence services said: "We don't have to stay here tonight, I know where we can go"; or the 6 year old son who said "He's so mean, what

are we waiting for". Teens have described how they felt empowered as they advocated for their abused mothers and helped them navigate through systems. We can safely assume that children are also affected by push-pull factors in the home, more so when there are multiple batterers.

- ◆ **Recommendation:** Inquire what messages children are communicating to their mother in order to provide both the support they need.
- **Negotiating financial support can depend on push-pull factors.** The level of spousal and/or child support an abused mother expects can be governed by the dynamics of push and pull factors. Her power to negotiate financial support would be severely limited if she were pushed out. Pull factors can also have a similar effect: the abuser blames his partner for leaving and sees himself as the wronged party. In addition, dowries, *nikka* (pre-nuptial contracts between Muslim couples), expensive gifts at marriage may become non-negotiable when push factors are operating.
- ◆ **Recommendation:** Explain these issues to battered women and to their family law attorney who may not know the cultural contexts so s/he can negotiate more effectively for her.

#### d. Discussion Questions for Trainees

##### → Example

*15 minutes*

A woman calls the shelter and says she has to come there immediately, but she wants to come without her kids (8 and 9 years of age). She doesn't provide much information about the domestic violence she is experiencing. How are you going to work with her?

1. What could be her reasons for leaving alone?
2. Design 2 or 3 questions you will ask to assess the situation better
3. Should you make a more directive intervention about her plan to leave the children at home? Why and why not?

- 
4. How will your responses differ if she wants to bring her 8-year old daughter with her and leave her 9-year old son with the extended family?

→ Call out

*20 minutes*

Trainees call out responses to above questions



TRAINER'S NOTATIONS:

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## 5. ANALYZING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE STRENGTHENS ADVOCACY



### NOTE TO TRAINERS

1. The issues below occur repeatedly in trainings and discussions on domestic violence. Trainers should select the salient points they want to address and build a way to have audience participation. They are included here because advocacy is influenced by the frameworks used to understand the problem.

#### → Refer trainees to handout

We turn our attention to some of the causes and explanations of gender-based violence because the strength of our advocacy is influenced by the frameworks we use for understanding and analyzing these issues.

#### *Patriarchy gives permission for violence against women*

Patriarchy is about the social relations of power between men and women, between men and men, and between women and women. It is a system for maintaining class and/or gender privilege and the *status quo* of power. It relies both on crude mechanisms like oppression and subtle ones like the law. Patriarchy exists in almost all cultures, including American cultures. The degree and rigidity with which it permeates gender relations varies.

Although patriarchy is mostly understood as a way of oppressing women, it is also about controlling men. The 'rule of thumb' is a good example. It gave men legal permission to batter their wife, but stipulated that wife-beaters could only use a stick no thicker than their thumb, thus it served as a way of controlling the extent of men's violence. The 'rule of thumb' demonstrates how male violence was legitimized, yet controlled by the patriarchal structures of society.

Patriarchy is thus an enforcer of traditional gender and class relations, and the most significant contributor to sexism and misogyny.



#### TRAINER'S NOTATIONS:

#### *Stress is not an explanation for violence*

We need to debunk the stress theory of violence that men batter women because they are having or have had a hard time. Stress is an explanation that privileges men's experience over women's.

Women are exposed to the same life experiences and stresses as men. They come from violent homes, they have childhood histories of abuse, they get cut off on the freeway, they get high or drunk, they get fired from their jobs, they juggle economic hardships, etc. Women are also socialized in cultures with legacies of colonialism, live in war zones, endure racism, deal with new cultures as immigrants, and face societal and linguistic barriers. And yet, women do not resort to physical battering or engage in systematic patterns of abuse and coercive control.

Non-abusive men are also subject to the many stressors and negative life experiences. Women and non-abusive men do, of course, have personal and inter-personal difficulties, psychological problems, feel depressed, lack parenting insights, lack job skills, are constrained by enmiserating poverty, and cope without resorting to violence. Finally, men who may not have any of these difficulties or deficits, batter.



#### TRAINER'S NOTATIONS:

### *Power and control establish inequality*

Power and control is the most widely accepted explanation for domestic violence, thus empowering battered women is central to advocacy. The explanations are familiar: men batter because they can, to have control over her, to establish his authority in the home, because it is a learned behavior, because society grants them permission and they exercise it with impunity, etc.

We have, however, very gendered notions of power. Men's power is seen as abusive, arrogant and forceful; or as ambitious, demanding and a successful expression of masculinity. Women's power, on the other hand, is about finding her voice and the space to express it – limited notions indeed of women's power.

What then *do* we mean when we talk about empowering women? About establishing an empowered sense of power for women and men? Power needs to be conceptualized as a healthy and important force because it can re-shape economic, social, and gender inequities, as well as deliver social justice.



#### TRAINER'S NOTATIONS:

### *Feminism strives for gender equality*

Feminism is a movement to gain equality for women. Or as the pithy wisdom of the bumper sticker reminds us: feminism is the radical notion that women are human beings. Feminism is about women claiming their rights to self-determination and equality, and pro-feminist men who support those claims. The struggle for equality is also about understanding women's resistance to sexism: how they use the power that is available to

them; how they claim space where they can; how they build alliances; how they engage in acts of subversion and rebellion; and how they ask others to bear witness to their pain.

Feminism is often met with strong backlash, evidence indeed that gender equality is considered radical and threatening.



### TRAINER'S NOTATIONS:

#### *Cultural explanations defend the culture of patriarchy and violence*

What role does culture play? It inhibits or defines the space within which power gets expressed, where gender relations can be negotiated, and gender roles re-defined.

When "culture" is used by our communities to explain and justify violence, these claims are most often based on frozen, male-defined ideas of culture. "Cultural freeze" refers to how traditions become tenaciously maintained and little change is allowed in. The culture of the home country becomes frozen in time, which makes for more rigid attitudes. "Cultural defenses" come next with claims such as "people in my culture behave this way and believe women should be treated this way, so it is alright for me to do so".

Claims about culture are supposed to defend the culture of the home country (be it Azerbaijan, Vietnam, etc). What is in fact being defended is the *culture of patriarchy* in the home country and the *culture of violence* everywhere. Cultural explanations protect how patriarchy is expressed and reinforced in the home country in order to justify gender inequity and violence.

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Thus, conventional notions of culture must be challenged in order to change its patriarchal traditions of misogyny. If there's any doubt about the culture of patriarchy, look at what proverbs say:

- ◆ Women, drums and donkeys are to be beaten. (Indian)
- ◆ I thank god everyday that I wasn't born a woman. (Jewish)
- ◆ Women are like eggs, the more you beat them the softer they are. (Italian)
- ◆ A man's best possession is a sympathetic wife. (Chinese)
- ◆ Nine fireplaces are not as good as one sun; nine daughters are not as good as one son. (Hmong)

What if *we*, as women and men opposing gender violence, re-wrote our proverbs?



TRAINER'S NOTATIONS:

# GENDER VIOLENCE IN ASIAN & PACIFIC ISLANDER COMMUNITIES

Firoza Chic Dabby

October 2007

## I. Introduction: Cultures of Resistance

Violence against women is a universal problem; the cultural expressions of that violence differ. Drawing attention to gender violence in particular cultures is risky because the nuances of cultural differences are hard to convey and can serve to confirm stereotypes. Culture is not the sum of tenaciously maintained traditions, but the intersection of dynamic forces that include social and political histories, practices and ideologies that are defined and re-defined by a plethora of its members and institutions. Women and children resist gender violence in the ways and spaces available to them, expressing agency (self-determination) through covert or overt strategies. These struggles occur in the contexts of additional structural oppressions, be they racism, anti-immigrant sentiments, homophobia, class elitism, etc. Even as advocates grapple with problematic issues within their communities, they engage in resistance – countering ‘cultural’ justifications, developing innovative prevention and intervention strategies, organizing to confront community complicity and systems failures. Cultures are not merely sites where multiple oppressions are enacted; but where so many of us – abused or not, survivor and advocate – engage in resistance and change through radical or reformist agendas, through negotiation and subversion, within and without existing state and community institutions.

## II. Identities and Ethnicities: Asians & Pacific Islanders

### Definitions

In the 2000 U.S. Census, the Federal Government defines "Asian American" to include persons having origins in any of the original peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asia, or the Indian subcontinent. "Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander" include Native Hawaiian, Samoan, Guamanian or Chamorro, Fijian, Tongan, or Marshallese peoples and encompasses the people within the United States jurisdictions of Melanesia, Micronesia and Polynesia.<sup>1</sup>

Historically, Asians and Pacific Islanders in the U.S. have been grouped together by government classifications as well as by us, as part of an intentional community-based strategy to build coalitions with one another. The 2000 Census no longer grouped Asians and Pacific Islanders together and established two separate groupings, Asian Americans and Native Hawaiians and Other Pacific Islanders (NHOPI).

There are conflicting views on the appropriateness of any aggregate classification or reference. For example, "Asian and Pacific Islander", "Asian Pacific American", "Asian American and Pacific Islander" and even the recent term "NHOPI" are all used to name our communities. Such groupings are ultimately political and part of a dynamic continuing process of self-determination and self-identification.

Based on its name, the API Institute uses the term "Asian and Pacific Islander" to include all people of Asian, Asian American, Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander ancestry who trace their origins to the countries, states, jurisdictions and/or the diasporic communities of these geographic regions.

### Identities

Identities overlap and occur simultaneously, not discretely or serially. Power does not rest on a single axis of identity; and identities are defined in many ways.

(a) Ethnicity: single, bi- or multi-racial; (b) Demographic and identity markers: sexual orientation, age, disability, languages spoken, religion, marital status; (c) Geographic location: rural, urban, suburban, military bases, poor neighborhoods; (d) Social location and history: type of labor performed, level of education, class

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<sup>1</sup> Harris, Philip and Jones, Nicholas. (2005). *We the People: Pacific Islanders in the United States*. United States Census Bureau. <http://www.census.gov/prod/2005pubs/censr-26.pdf>

position and mobility, immigration or refugee status, employment status; (e) Political history: be it shaped by colonialism, imperialism, civil or international wars, racial segregation, capitalism, socialism; and (f) Practices: food, music, holidays, styles of dress, celebrations.

### Ethnicities and Regional Groupings

Asians and Pacific Islanders are generally grouped by regions although some of these can be politically controversial. There is tremendous diversity, with Asia having more than 50 countries and there are more ethnicities than countries, e.g., the Hmong are an ethnic group from Laos. We have tried to be thorough, but notions of identity carry political, social and familial meanings too complex to analyze here.

**Central Asians** Afghani, Azerbaijani, Kazakh, Kyrgyz, Tajik, Turkmen, Uzbek.

**East Asians** Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Okinawan, Taiwanese, Tibetan.

**Hawaiians & Pacific Islanders** (in the U.S. Jurisdictions & Territories) Carolinian, Chamorro, Chuukese, Fijian, Guamanian, Hawaiian, Kosraean, Marshallese, Native Hawaiian, Niuean, Palauan, Pohnpeian, Samoan, Tokelauan, Tongan, Yapese.

**Southeast Asians** Burmese, Cambodian, Filipino, Hmong, Indonesian, Laotian, Malaysian, Mien, Papua New Guinean, Singaporean, Timorese, Thai, Vietnamese.

**South Asians** Bangladeshi, Bhutanese, Indian, Nepali, Pakistani, Sri Lankan.

**West Asians** This is a contested term, most people from the region do not self-identify as such. West Asia is typically referred to as the Middle East; and geographically includes the countries of Bahrain, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Turkey (straddles Europe and Asia) United Arab Emirates and Yemen.

## Demographic and Socio-Economic Data

The U.S. Census and several national Asian and Pacific Islander organizations provide regional and local information on population growth, geographic distribution, poverty rates, housing, and linguistic isolation for Asian American, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander subgroups. Reports based on census data analysis illustrate extreme differences in socio-economic characteristics among Asians, Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders and include information relevant to advocates working to meet the needs of API battered women. Demographic reports are available from the following:

<a href="http://www.census.gov">http://www.census.gov</a>	U.S. Census Bureau
<a href="http://www.apiahf.org">http://www.apiahf.org</a>	Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum
<a href="http://demographic.apalc.org">http://demographic.apalc.org</a>	Asian Pacific American Legal Center
<a href="http://www.aapcho.org">http://www.aapcho.org</a>	Association of Asian Pacific Community Health Organizations

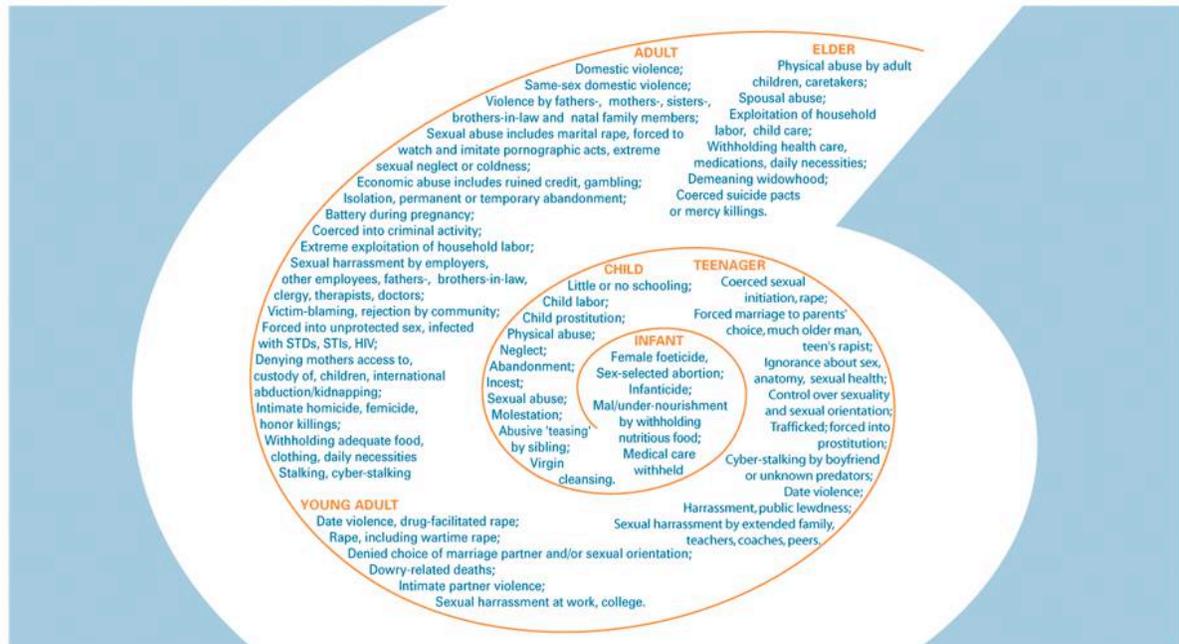
## III. Gender Violence Occurs Across the Lifespan

From the aborting of female fetuses to intimate homicide, girls and women may encounter numerous oppressions during infancy, childhood, adolescence, adulthood, and as elders. Some of these are confined to one stage in the lifecycle, some continue into subsequent stages. Domestic violence is just one amongst many forms of violence against women. It is about more than physical, sexual, economic and emotional battering; it is also about living in a climate of fear. The lives of abused Asian and Pacific Islander women are shadowed by the cultural burdens of shame and devaluation.

By enumerating types of violence over the lifecourse, the Lifetime Spiral implicitly locates a range of abusers in the lives of girls and women, revealing patterns of victimization and perpetration. The Lifetime Spiral is designed to be used by everyone to identify histories of violence in their own lives or in the lives of family and friends. By raising awareness about the historical nature of violence against women and girls, we can begin to diminish victim-blaming.

Gender violence can be experienced in the context of additional oppressions based on race, ethnicity, age, sexual orientation, gender identity, type of labor performed, level of education, class position, disability, and/or immigration or refugee status.

## Lifetime Spiral of Gender Violence



Chinese, English, Farsi, Korean and Tagalog versions can be downloaded from [api-gbv.org](http://api-gbv.org)

### IV. Analyzing Violence against Women

Domestic violence is just one amongst many forms of violence against women. It is more than physical, sexual, economic and emotional abuse; it is also about living in a climate of fear, misery, loss, mistrust, humiliation and despair. Abused Asian and Pacific Islander women's lives are also shadowed by the cultural burdens of shame and devaluation. We now address some of the usual explanations about domestic violence.

#### Patriarchy gives Permission for Violence against Women

Patriarchy is about the social relations of power between men and women, women and women, and men and men. It informs our work in deep ways. It is a system for maintaining class and/or gender privilege and the status quo of power. It relies both on crude mechanisms like oppression and subtle ones like the law. Although patriarchy is mostly about oppressing women, it is also about controlling men. The 'rule of thumb' is a good example: it gave a man legal permission to batter his wife, but by stipulating that wife-beaters could only use a stick no thicker than their thumb, it served as a way of controlling the extent of men's violence. So male violence was legitimized, yet controlled by the patriarchal structures of

society. Patriarchy is thus an enforcer of traditional gender and class relations, and the most significant contributor to sexism and misogyny. Patriarchy exists in many, including American, cultures. The degree and rigidity with which it permeates gender relations varies.

### Stress is not an Explanation for Violence

We need to debunk the stress theory of violence: that men batter women because they are having or have had a hard time. Stress is an explanation that privileges men's experiences over women's. Women have the same life experiences and stresses: they come from violent homes, they have childhood histories of abuse, they get cut off on the freeway, they get high or drunk, they get fired from their jobs, they juggle economic hardships, etc. Women are socialized in cultures with legacies of colonialism, live in war zones, endure racism, deal with new cultures as immigrants and face societal and linguistic barriers. And yet, women by and large do not resort to physical abuse. Non-abusive men are also subject to the same stressors. Women and non-abusive men do of course have personal and interpersonal difficulties, psychological problems, feel depressed, lack parenting insights, have inadequate job skills, are constrained by enmiserating poverty, but cope without resorting to violence. Finally, men who do not have any of these difficulties or deficits, batter.

### Power & Control Maintain Gender Inequality

The presence of domestic violence tells us about the presence of inequality and the extent of the violence tells us about the extent of the inequality. Power and control are the most widely accepted root causes of domestic violence and empowering battered women is therefore central to advocacy. The explanations are familiar: men batter because they can, to have control over her, to establish authority in the home, its learnt behavior, society permits men to exercise power and control with impunity. However, power gets conflated with masculinity and we have very gendered notions of power. Men's power is seen negatively as abusive, arrogant and forceful; or positively as ambitious, demanding and expressing successful masculinity. Women's power by contrast is vaguely conceptualized, focusing on finding voice and the space to express it - limited notions indeed of women's power. What then *do* we mean when we talk about empowering women, about an empowered sense of power for women and men? Power should be articulated as an important, healthy force that resists oppression, builds social justice and re-shapes economic, social and gender inequities.

## Feminism Establishes for Gender Equality

The pithy wisdom of the bumper sticker will have to suffice: feminism is the radical notion that women are human beings. Feminism is about women claiming their rights to self-determination and equality and pro-feminist men supporting those claims. The struggle for equality is also about understanding women's resistance to sexism – how they use the power that is available to them, how they claim space where they can, how they build alliances, how they engage in acts of subversion and rebellion, how they ask others to bear witness to their pain. Feminism is met with strong backlash, evidence that women's equality and gender equity are considered radical and threatening.

## Cultural Explanations Defend the Culture of Patriarchy & Violence

Culture defines the spaces within which power is expressed, where gender relations are negotiated and gender roles re-defined. When "culture" is used by our communities to explain and justify violence against women these claims are mostly based on frozen, male-defined ideas of culture. Cultural freeze refers to how traditions become tenaciously maintained, allowing in little change – the culture of the home country becomes frozen in time, making for more rigid attitudes. Freeze associated with immigration is common in women and men, but when used to condone domestic violence it becomes destructive. Cultural defenses come next, claiming that "people in my culture behave this way and believe women should be treated this way, so it is alright for me to do so". Supposedly, these claims are defending the culture of the home country. What is in fact being defended is the culture of patriarchy in the home country; and the culture of violence everywhere. Cultural explanations protect how male authority is expressed and reinforced in the home country in order to justify gender inequity and violence. So, conventional notions of culture must be challenged in order to change its patriarchal traditions of misogyny.

## V. Domestic Violence against API Women

### Distinguishing Dynamics

Domestic violence in several Asian communities has some different patterns, forms and dynamics of abuse. While trying to show a complex picture of what is happening in Asian families, we want to avoid stereotyping them. There are similarities between all battered women's experiences; these are not enumerated here. Some of the dynamics Asian women describe may be particular to only certain ethnic groups some may be common to many of them. However, there are two distinguishing dynamics:

- ◆ *Multiple Batterers* in the home, particularly male and female in-laws.
- ◆ *Push & Pull Factors* where women experience being pushed out of the relationship or the family home, sometimes more frequently than they are pulled or enticed back into the relationship.

### *Physical Abuse Can Include*

- Battering by multiple abusers in the extended family home can include mothers-in-law, fathers-in-law, brothers-in-law, sisters-in-law, ex-wives, new wives, adult siblings, and/or members of a woman's natal family;
- Intensive surveillance, cyber-stalking, monitoring activities and visitors, exercising abusive controls from afar utilizing multiple technologies;
- Withholding food, healthcare, medication, adequate clothing, and hygiene products like soap, shampoo, etc;
- Immediate abandonment in the home involves leaving a new wife in her country of origin without any means of contact because the husband leaves a false address, or in the U.S., filing for divorce within a few months of marriage;
- Hyper-exploitation of women's household labor to serve all members of the extended family; and
- Homicides that encompass a broader range of deaths than murder by an intimate, including honor killings, contract killings, dowry or bride price related deaths, killing of family members in the home country, or being driven by one's husband and in-laws into committing suicide.

### *Emotional Abuse Can Include*

- 'Push' factors out of the relationship from a husband and his family more frequently than 'pull' factors back into the relationship;
- Tightly prescribed and more rigid gender roles for women and men;
- Severe isolation by inhibiting contact with family in the home country and other support systems;
- Using religion to justify domestic violence and to threaten loss of children, social status, financial support and community;
- Pressure from the natal family to stay in the marriage and tolerate the abuse; and
- Silencing battered women and blaming them for bringing dishonor to the family because of the strong nexus of shame and public disclosure.

### *Sexual Abuse Can Include*

- Excessive restrictions designed to control women's sexuality, grave threats about being sexually active;
- Blaming victims for rape, incest or coerced sex, being forced to marry a rapist;
- Denying the right to choose or express a different sexual orientation;
- Being forced to watch and imitate pornography;
- Coercion into unprotected sex which could result in sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV/AIDS;
- Extreme sexual neglect and coldness;
- Sexual harassment not only from co-workers, but from family members, community leaders, clergymen, etc.;
- Forced marriages (not to be confused with arranged marriages) to unknown and generally much older men – marital rape is exacerbated in such situations;
- Ignorance about sex, sexual health and anatomy; and
- Sexual violence in home countries and attendant unresolved trauma can be used by batterers to demean, reject, silence, blame or further violate their

intimate partners. These experiences particularly affect refugee and immigrant women who may have been raped in war zones, refugee camps, on unsafe immigration routes or because they were cultural or religious minorities in their home countries, e.g., Muslim women raped in (predominantly Hindu) Gujarat, India or Shan women raped by Burmese militias.

### *Abuse of Women Who Are Mothers Can Include*

- Forced abortions, sex-selected abortions when the fetus is female, or multiple, repeated pregnancies to bear sons in the family;
- False reports and accusations by batterers intended to cause mothers to lose custody of their children. This is achieved by manipulating social service, child protection, immigration, child custody, and criminal and civil legal systems to the advantage of the batterer and his family; and
- Using culture and cultural norms to separate mothers from their children by sending children to paternal grandparents in the home country, abducting/kidnapping the couple's children and returning to the batterer's home country, stigmatizing divorced mothers and gaining custody based on cultural beliefs that children belong to their father.

### *Same-Sex, Same-Gender Domestic Violence Can Include*

- Greater threats associated with outing a partner in communities where homosexuality is ostracized.

### *Abuse Based on Immigration Status Can Include*

- Making false declarations to I.C.E. (formerly INS) about a partner's immigration status, claiming that she entered into a fraudulent marriage, and/or not proceeding with (green card) applications to regularize a spouse's status;
- Threats of deportation if she reports domestic violence;
- Withholding or hiding passports and other important documents;
- Being forced to accept a husband's existing relationships in the U.S. After marriage in the home country women sometimes have to contend with their husband's existing heterosexual or homosexual partner. The new wife's

vulnerable immigration status forces her to accept whatever arrangements he insists upon;

- Trans-national abandonment, whereby untraceable husbands return alone to the U.S. on the pretext of filing immigration papers, a practice referred to as "marry-and-dump"; and
- Relationships contracted through International Marriage Bureaus that become abusive because batterers serially marry and entrap women from other countries or abandon them after their fiancé visa expires within 3 months of arrival in the U.S.

### *Isolating Socio-Cultural Barriers by Batterers, Systems & Communities*

- Systems barriers facing immigrant women, their lack of familiarity with systems and resources in the U.S., and community attitudes towards them are exploited by batterers and incorporated into their abuse;
- Women, particularly non-citizens and those with limited English proficiency face language, economic, racial, cultural, religious, professional, and/or identity-based barriers to social and legal services;
- The strong nexus of public disclosure and shame in many Asian communities is a barrier against seeking help;
- Covert or overt support and the lack of sanctions that accrue to batterers increase their impunity and entitlement to violence; and
- Community attitudes reinforce domestic violence by utilizing victim-blaming, silencing, shaming and rejecting battered women who speak up or seek help.

## VI. Statistics

Statistical sound-bites do not convey the complex methods and instruments of data collection, the experiences of the study's respondents, and the ethnic and demographic diversity of API communities. So we have contextualized the data, provided information about methodology, and commented (in parentheses) on some of the conclusions.

### Extent of the Problem

Forty one to sixty percent of Asian women report experiencing physical and/or sexual violence by an intimate partner during their lifetime in community-based studies compiled by the API Institute on Domestic Violence.<sup>2</sup> This is higher than the prevalence rate for other groups: Whites (21.3%), African-Americans (26.3%), Hispanic of any race (21.2%), mixed race (27.0%), and American Indians and Alaskan Natives (30.7%).<sup>3</sup> It is also higher than the 12.8% rate reported for Asians and Pacific Islanders in the same national survey which may be attributed to under-reporting arising from language and socio-cultural barriers.

### Domestic Violence in Specific Asian Communities

**Cambodian** In a study conducted by the Asian Task Force Against Domestic Violence in Boston, using a self-administered questionnaire at ethnic fairs:<sup>4</sup>

- ◆ 44–47% of Cambodians interviewed said they knew a woman who experienced domestic violence.

**Chinese** In a random telephone survey of 262 Chinese men and women in Los Angeles county:<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Asian Pacific Institute on Gender-based Violence. *Fact Sheet on Domestic Violence in Asian Communities*. San Francisco: Author, 2005 (Revised). This figure is based on studies of women's experiences of domestic violence conducted among different Asian ethnic groups in the U.S. The low end of the range is from a study by A. Raj and J. Silverman, Intimate partner violence against South-Asian women in Greater Boston *J Am Med Women's Assoc.* 2002; 57(2): 111-114. The high end of the range is from a study by M. Yoshihama, Domestic violence against women of Japanese descent in Los Angeles: Two methods of estimating prevalence. *Violence Against Women.* 1999, 5(8): 869-897.

<sup>3</sup> Tjaden P., and Thoennes N. *Extent, Nature and Consequences of Intimate Partner Violence: Research Report*. Washington, DC: National Institute of Justice and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; July 2000.

(This data is from a telephone survey of a nationally representative sample of 8,000 women and 8,000 men from all ethnic backgrounds conducted from Nov 1995 to May 1996.)

<sup>4</sup> Yoshioka MR, Dang Q. *Asian Family Violence Report: A Study of the Cambodian, Chinese, Korean, South Asian, and Vietnamese Communities in Massachusetts*. Boston: Asian Task Force Against Domestic Violence, Inc.; 2000.

<sup>5</sup> Yick AG. Predictors of physical spousal/intimate violence in Chinese American families. *J Fam Violence*, 2000; 15(3): 249-267.

- ◆ 18.1% of respondents reported experiencing "minor physical violence" by a spouse or intimate partner within their lifetime, and 8% of respondents reported "severe physical violence" experienced during their lifetime. (*"Minor-severe" categories were based on the researcher's classification criteria.*)
- ◆ More acculturated respondents (as assessed by the researchers) were twice as likely to have been victims of severe physical violence. (*Although the author states "It is possible that traditional cultural values serve as a protective buffer against stressors engendered by immigration"(p. 263), higher rates among more acculturated respondents may be due to their increased likelihood to report abuse.*)

**Filipina** In a survey conducted by the Immigrant Women's Task Force of the Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights and Services: <sup>6</sup>

- ◆ 20% of 54 undocumented Filipina women living in the San Francisco Bay Area reported having experienced some form of domestic violence, including physical, emotional, or sexual abuse, in their country of origin or in the U.S.

**Japanese** In a face-to-face interview study, conducted in 1995, of a random sample of 211 Japanese immigrant women and Japanese American women in Los Angeles County:

- ◆ 61% reported some form of physical, emotional, or sexual partner violence that they considered abusive -including culturally demeaning practices such as overturning a dining table, or throwing liquid at a woman- sometime prior to the interview.<sup>7</sup>
- ◆ 52% reported having experienced physical violence during their lifetime. When the probability that some women who have not been victimized at the time of the interview, but may be abused at a later date is calculated, 57% of women are estimated to experience a partner's physical violence by age 49<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Hoagland C, Rosen K. *Dreams Lost, Dreams Found: Undocumented Women in the Land of Opportunity*. San Francisco, CA: Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights and Services, Immigrant Women's Task Force; Spring 1990.

<sup>7</sup> Yoshihama M. Domestic violence against women of Japanese descent in Los Angeles: Two methods of estimating prevalence. *Violence Against Women*. 1999; 5(8): 869-897.

<sup>8</sup> Yoshihama M, Gillespie B. Age adjustment and recall bias in the analysis of domestic violence data: Methodological improvement through the application of survival analysis methods. *J Fam Violence*. 2002; 17(3): 199-221.

- ◆ No significant generational differences were found in the age-adjusted risk of experiencing intimate physical, sexual or emotional violence.<sup>9</sup>

**Korean** In a study of 256 Korean men from randomly selected Korean households in Chicago and in Queens (which then had the largest Korean population on the East Coast) in 1993:<sup>10</sup>

- ◆ 18% of the respondents reported committing at least one of the following acts of physical violence within the past year: throwing something, pushing, grabbing, shoving, or slapping their wife.
- ◆ 6.3% of the men committed what the researcher classified as "severe violence" i.e., kicking, biting, hitting with a fist, threatening with a gun or knife, shooting, or stabbing.
- ◆ 33% of "male-dominated relationships" experienced at least one incident of domestic violence during the year, whereas only 12% of "egalitarian" relationships did. (*Researchers classified couples into four types of relationships—i.e., egalitarian, divided power, male-dominated, and female-dominated—based on the respondents' answers about how the couple makes decisions.*)
- ◆ Nearly 39% of husbands who were categorized as experiencing "high stress" perpetrated domestic violence during the past year, whereas one out of 66 husbands categorized as experiencing "low stress" did so. (*This correlation does not necessarily mean that stress causes or leads to domestic violence. Women and non-abusive men are also exposed to 'high stress' and do not resort to domestic violence.*)

In a survey of a convenience sample of 214 Korean women and 121 Korean men in the San Francisco Bay Area conducted in 2000 by Shimtuh, a program serving Korean women in crisis:<sup>11</sup>

- ◆ 42% of the respondents said they knew of a Korean woman who experienced physical violence from a husband or boyfriend.
- ◆ About 50% of the respondents knew someone who suffered regular emotional abuse.

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<sup>9</sup> Yoshihama M, Horrocks J. Post-traumatic stress symptoms and victimization among Japanese American women. *J Consult Clin Psychol.* 2002; 70(2): 205-215.

<sup>10</sup> Kim JY, Sung K. Conjugal violence in Korean American families: A residue of the cultural tradition. *J Fam Violence.* 2000; 15(4): 331-345.

<sup>11</sup> Shimtuh, Korean American Domestic Violence Program. *Korean American Community of the Bay Area Domestic Violence Needs Assessment Report.* Oakland, CA: Author; 2000.

A 1986 study involving face-to-face interviews of a convenience sample of 150 Korean women living in Chicago found that:<sup>12</sup>

- ◆ 60% reported experiencing physical abuse by an intimate partner sometime in their lives.
- ◆ 36.7% reported sexual violence by an intimate partner sometime in their lives.

**South Asian**<sup>13</sup> Raj and Silverman's study of 160 South Asian women (who were married or in a heterosexual relationship), recruited through community outreach methods such as flyers, snowball sampling, and referrals in Greater Boston, found that:<sup>14</sup>

- ◆ 40.8% of the participants reported that they had been physically and/or sexually abused in some way by their current male partners in their lifetime; 36.9% reported having been victimized in the past year.
- ◆ 65% of the women reporting physical abuse also reported sexual abuse, and almost a third (30.4%) of those reporting sexual abuse reported injuries, some requiring medical attention.
- ◆ No significant difference was found in the prevalence of domestic violence between arranged marriages (*typically refers to marriages arranged by parents or relatives of each member of the couple*) and non-arranged marriages.<sup>15</sup>

**Vietnamese** In a study of 30 Vietnamese women recruited from a civic association that serves Vietnamese women in Boston:<sup>16</sup>

- ◆ 47% reported intimate physical violence sometime in their lifetime.
- ◆ 30% reported intimate physical violence in the past year.

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<sup>12</sup> Song-Kim Y.I. Battered Korean Women in Urban United States. In: Furuto SM, Renuka B, Chung DK, Murase K, Ross-Sheriff F, eds. *Social Work Practice with Asian Americans: Sage Sourcebooks for the Human Services Series*. Vol. 20. Newbury Park, CA: Sage. 1992; 213-226.

<sup>13</sup> Refers to those who trace their origins to the countries or diasporic communities of Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

<sup>14</sup> Raj A, Silverman J. Intimate partner violence against South-Asian women in Greater Boston. *J Am Med Women's Assoc*. 2002; 57(2): 111-114.

<sup>15</sup> Raj A, Silverman J. "Violence Against Immigrant Women: The Roles of Culture, Context, and Legal Immigrant Status on Intimate Partner Violence" *Violence Against Women* 8:3, 2002 (367-398).

<sup>16</sup> Tran CG. *Domestic violence among Vietnamese refugee women: Prevalence, abuse characteristics, psychiatric symptoms, and psychosocial factors* (Dissertation). Boston, MA: Boston University; 1997.

### *Fact Sheet: Domestic Violence in Asian Communities*

The complete version of the API Institute's Fact Sheet has additional data on types of abuse, service utilization, attitudes towards domestic violence, attitudes to seeking help, abuse witnessed or experienced as a child and domestic violence related homicides.

## **VII. Community Engagement & Outreach**

Outreach and intervention strategies by Asian and Pacific Islander advocates have arisen as accommodations and alternatives to non-API domestic violence programs. Innovative strategies have been crafted out of necessity and by vision and intentionality. The ideas listed below have been compiled from the brilliant and hard work done by Asian and Pacific Islander advocates and organizations across the country. We have listed strategies very briefly – some of them are used by one agency, some by several. The API Institute provides technical assistance on the details and implications of adopting certain strategies and can put advocates in touch with programs using them.

### **In General**

- If you plan outreach efforts to a particular group, say monolingual rural women with no or limited English, be sure you can respond to their needs when they utilize your services.
- If your organization is not planning to provide services, then build relationships with other organizations in the area that will.
- Collaborations need clarity about what's expected from all partner agencies. So, establish the limits of what all agencies can provide; set up procedures to meet regularly about case management; and ensure collaborative strategizing about community organizing.

### **Outreach Strategies**

1. Outreach to blue-collar workers: Contact small business owners and offer to have an informal discussion during lunch break about domestic violence. This builds networks between the women and breaks the silence amongst them about domestic violence.

2. Publicize services at cultural events or venues that serve your ethnic community, e.g., palm cards in women's restrooms at movie theatres, or flyers on cars in the parking lot.
3. Participate in low-key ways in community projects at a faith center e.g., packing grocery bags for needy families and talking to other volunteers there about domestic violence and available services because they often have relationships to recipient families.
4. Coat-check at clubs, especially for nights/performers that attract an API crowd.
5. Place advertisements in ethnic newspapers and other media.
6. Grocery stores in ethnic areas such as Chinatown: Supply flyers that are inserted in each bag or grocery bags printed with domestic violence services information.
7. Be a contingent marching in an annual parade on Pakistani Independence Day, Chinese New Year, Tet, Pride March, etc. Since these are celebratory events, organizers may balk at including domestic violence programs, but anti-violence advocacy is something to celebrate as it strengthens the community.
8. Information and outreach to children: An 8-year old showed his mother the palm card he'd got at school, "I know where we can go, mom".
9. Citizenship or English as a Second Language (ESL) classes: Provide information and have discussions on domestic violence.
10. Door knocking (if your community is in an identifiable geographic location): Because of safety considerations this needs to be carefully planned, and is most frequently done in conjunction with distributing health information, e.g., about smoking or dental care for children.
11. Independence through driving or public transportation: Assisting battered women to learn how to drive e.g., paying for driving lessons, helping them get their license, familiarizing them with public transport by accompanying them through the system on the routes they use, providing bus passes.
12. In-service trainings for medical professionals serving your ethnic community so they can provide referrals or have service information in their offices.
13. Outreach through midwives: Asian women may often select midwives to ensure a female practitioner, so outreach through their practices and training for them can reach a significant group.

14. Consulate offices: Informational training for consular staff so they can assist battered women with passport problems. Ask if your services can be listed on the consulate website.
15. Small gatherings: Invite a small group of 6-8 women from the community for a discussion/informational session on some issues like incest, or same-sex domestic violence, issues that are harder to address in a larger public forum. Strategize about how to raise awareness about the problem and responses to it.
16. Plays and dramatizations about domestic violence on ethnic radio so non-English speaking women in workplaces where the radio is on a lot, get information and resources.
17. Youth created skits or rap or spoken word events on dating violence, followed by discussions and youth input about prevention.
18. Approach leaders of religious institutions and have them set aside an annual donation (mosques collect *zakat*, churches collect tithes, etc.) for the domestic violence program in your and their community.
19. Parenting classes for those with young and/or teenage children as a way to have public discussions about domestic violence and change community attitudes.
20. Training for beauty salon workers in nail salons, hairdressers, etc. to recognize domestic violence and offer resource information to customers.
21. Put information up at bathroom stalls at the local health club.
22. Hold a vigil following a domestic violence related homicide.
23. Outreach to university students by tabling at events, speaking at the women's center and conducting in-service training for staff of the campus health center and university police.
24. *Chai* house gatherings: Hold bi-monthly events at a local tea/coffee house to discuss issues such as work, stress, juggling work and family life, and domestic violence.
25. Provide computers to a church group for training on how to access information on the internet and make domestic violence one of the topics.
26. Posting service and contact information (with tear off that women can take to their apartments) in the laundry rooms of large apartment complexes where many Asian families live.

27. Art and technology: Use the arts, media, film, drama, dance, pod-casts and other cultural events as an opportunity talk about violence against women. E.g., compile clips from popular films that show violence against women and have discussions around them.
28. Toll-free numbers for services: These are used by many API programs – they encourage callers because there is no cost associated with a long-distance call and the number does not appear on the callers' phone bill, protecting confidentiality.

## VIII. Publications & Materials

### Advocacy, Services & Cultural Competency

- Advocacy & Cultural Contexts: Training Curriculum
- Cultural Competency Curriculum
- Domestic Violence in Specific Communities: Cambodian, Chinese, Filipino, Hmong, Japanese, Lesbian, Bisexual & Transgender Women, Muslim, South Asian and Vietnamese.
- Five Years of Activism: 2000-2005
- Gender Violence in Asian and Pacific Islander Communities
- Hmong Women's Dialogues Project: Our Voices Create our Future
- Innovative Strategies to Address Domestic Violence in Asian & Pacific Islander Communities: Emerging Themes, Models and Interventions

### Analyzing Gender Violence

- Coiled Spring of Domestic Violence
- Engendering Change: Transforming Gender Roles in API Communities
- Framing Batterer Accountability in the Context of Advocacy: Issues & Questions
- Lifetime Spiral of Gender Violence

## Bibliographies

- Reference bibliographies by author and by ethnic groups

## Child Welfare & Domestic Violence Systems

- Learning from the Experiences of Battered Immigrant, Refugee and Indigenous Women Involved with Child Protective Services to Inform a Dialogue Among Domestic Violence Activists and Advocates

## Community Organizing

- Community Engagement Continuum: Outreach, Mobilization, Organizing and Accountability to Address Violence Against Women in Asian & Pacific Islander Communities
- Community Organizing: Resources & Materials
- Training Curriculum on Community Engagement

## Directories

- Asian and Pacific Islander Domestic Violence Programs in the U.S.
- International Resources Directory
- National Resources for Technical Assistance & Training

## Homicide

- Domestic Violence Related Killings: Research Report
- Understanding Domestic Homicides in Asian and Pacific Islander Populations

## Sexual Violence

- Sexual Violence & API Women
- Sexual Violence Training Curriculum for Domestic Violence Advocates

### Statistics

- Fact Sheet on Domestic Violence in Asian Communities

### Translation, Interpretation & Language Access

- Bibliography of Materials to Address Limited English Proficiency in Social & Legal Services
- Glossary of Domestic Violence Terms: English, Chinese, Japanese, Korean and Vietnamese
- Justice and Safety Denied: Advocating Equal Language Access for API Battered Women
- Language Interpretation Guidelines for Working with Asian Battered Women (Information packet)
- Translated Materials List (Information package)

### Trafficking

- Trafficking: Considerations and Recommendations for Domestic Violence Advocates

### VAWA: Violence Against Women Act

- VAWA 2005 Technical Assistance Brief: Implementing Culturally and Linguistically Specific Services in API Communities

### *Download Publications From:*

[api-gbv.org](http://api-gbv.org)

## About the API Institute on Domestic Violence

### *Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum*

The Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum is a national policy organization advocating for the health and well-being of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders. APIAHF envisions a multi-cultural society where Asian American and Pacific Islander communities are included and represented in health, political, social and economic areas, and where there is social justice for all. Its program areas focus on chronic diseases, community capacity building to eliminate health disparities, domestic violence, HIV and health policy. [www.apiahf.org](http://www.apiahf.org)

### *Asian & Pacific Islander Institute on Domestic Violence*

The Asian and Pacific Islander Institute on Domestic Violence is a national resource center and clearinghouse on gender violence in API communities. It serves a national network of advocates, community members, organizations, service agencies, professionals, researchers, policy advocates and activists from community and social justice organizations working to eliminate violence against API women. The API Institute's goals focus on strengthening advocacy, organizing communities, and influencing public policy and systems change. To that end, it provides an excellent website and resource center, offers training and technical assistance, analyzes critical issues and policies, emphasizes intra-API cultural competency, disseminates and conducts research, and promotes pan-Asian and culturally-specific community models of prevention and intervention.

### For Technical Assistance:

Contact the API Institute by phone or email, [info@api-gbv.org](mailto:info@api-gbv.org)  
Chic Dabby, Executive Director 415-568-3315

### To Join the Listserve

Postings include funding announcements, trainings and conferences, information and publications related to violence against API women. Community-based-organizations and advocates serving Asians and Pacific Islanders are invited to subscribe by e-mailing [info@api-gbv.org](mailto:info@api-gbv.org)