### Lifecourse Experiences of Intimate Partner Violence and Help-Seeking among Filipina, Indian, and Pakistani Women:

# **Implications for Justice System Responses**

July 30, 2011

### **Executive Summary**

#### **Background**

Research on intimate partner violence (IPV) in Asian communities is critical given a nexus of interrelated, complex factors: high prevalence estimates of IPV against Asian women, the over-representation of Asian victims in IPVrelated homicides, the lack of socio-culturally tailored and linguistically accessible assistance programs, the underutilization of outside help by Asian battered women, and myriad structural, institutional, and socio-cultural barriers to help-seeking (Crites, 1990; Ho, 1990; Kanuha, 1987; McDonnell & Abdulla, 2001; Shimtuh, 2000; Tran, 1997; Raj, Silverman, McLeary-Sills, & Liu, 2004; Yoshihama, 2000, 2002; Yoshihama & Dabby, 2009; Yoshioka, Gilbert, El-Bassel, Baig-Amin, 2003). There are virtually no studies that specifically examine Asian battered women's experiences with the criminal justice system (CJS). Research on IPV over the lifecourse and related help-seeking efforts is also scarce but necessary given that IPV often recurs over the lifecourse and that survivors' decisions to seek help and the preferred and actual sources of help change over time and are shaped by the current situation, as well as past experiences of IPV and help-seeking (Bachman & Coker, 1995; Duterte et al., 2008; Fleury, Sullivan, Bybee, & Davidson, 1998; Hickman & Simpson, 2003; Jasinski, 2003).

#### Goals

The goal of this research project is to enhance the understanding of Asian battered women's experiences in seeking help from the criminal justice system (CJS) and other (non-CJS) programs and develop recommendations for system responses to IPV in Asian communities. This project focused on selected Asian ethnic groups – Filipina, Indian and Pakistani. This project was jointly conducted by the University of Michigan School of Social Work and the Asian & Pacific Islander Institute on Domestic Violence of the Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum. This report addressed the following research questions:

- When do Asian battered women experience various types of IPV over their lifecourse?
- When do Asian battered women come into contact with CJS and non-CJS agencies?

- What kinds of responses do Asian battered women receive from CJS and non-CJS agencies?
- What responses do Asian battered women perceive as helpful?
- What are the barriers to contacting CJS agencies?
- What suggestions do Asian battered women have for improving CJS responses to IPV in Asian communities?

#### Research Design and Methods

#### Respondents

Given the enormous ethnic, socio-cultural, linguistic, and religious diversity among Asians, we focused on three major Asian subgroups: Filipinas, Indians and Pakistanis, with selection criteria limiting the sample to those between the ages of 18 and 60 who had experienced physical violence, sexual violence and/or stalking at the hands of an intimate partner while residing in the San Francisco Bay Area (comprised of nine counties). We used a range of outreach methods (e.g., flyers at community venues and events, advertisements in various media outlets) to recruit respondents.

We conducted face-to-face interviews in English, Tagalog, and Hindi with a total of 143 women (87 Filipina women and 56 Indian and Pakistani women) who met the selection criteria. The respondents' mean age was 40.7 for Filipina and 34.5 for Indian/Pakistani women. The majority of the respondents (64.4% of Filipina and 82.1% of Indian/Pakistani women) were born outside the United States. Among foreign-born respondents, the mean age at which they came to the United States was 22-23 years old. At the time of the interview, 19.6% of Filipina women were married and another 27.6% were cohabiting with a partner; and among Indian/Pakistani women, 39.3% were married, and another 28.6% were cohabiting with a partner.

Life History Calendar Method and Interview Procedures

To facilitate the respondents' memory retrieval of their life experiences over time, we used the Life History Calendar (LHC) method (Freedman, Thornton, Camburn, Alwin, & Young-DeMarco, 1988). The LHC method is designed to collect lifecourse data retrospectively and to improve respondents' memory recall by asking first about memorable and/or easily recalled events and recording their occurrences in a familiar calendar format and in a manner that is accessible to the respondents during the interview (Freedman et al., 1988; McPherson, Popielarz, & Drobnic, 1992).

During the interview, respondents were asked about their experiences in various aspects of their lives (e.g., residential moves, birth of children) followed by questions about their relationship history, prior to answering questions about IPV. Interviewers then asked respondents if they had experienced IPV in each of their intimate relationships using behavior-specific items: physical violence (5 items); sexual violence (3 items), and stalking (2 items). For each type of IPV reported, the interviewer probed about the age at which a respondent experienced that type of IPV for the first time, and if and when it occurred in subsequent years. Next, respondents were asked about their contact with CJS agencies and non-CJS programs such as legal assistance,

shelter, domestic violence programs, as well as the types of responses they received from these agencies/programs. Victims do not typically initiate contact with CJS agencies and personnel, such as prosecutor/DA's office, DA victim/ witness advocates, and criminal court, but tend to have contact with these agencies and personnel through their initial involvements with the police. Hence, in this report, we examined respondent-initiated contact with the police in great detail.

In the last part of the interview, respondents were asked open-ended questions concerning a) the most helpful response they have received from any individual or organization; b) reasons for not having contacted any CJS agencies (when applicable); and c) their suggestions for improving the CJS responses to Asian battered women.

#### Analytical Approaches

To understand the timing of women's experience of IPV across the lifecourse, we examined the trajectories of three types of IPV – physical violence, sexual violence, and stalking. We used an analytic strategy known as multilevel modeling (MLM) to model women's individual and collective trajectories and assess whether the trajectories of IPV and help-seeking varied by immigration/generational position¹ and age cohort. Responses to open-ended questions underwent content analysis.

#### **Key Findings**

Summary of Trajectories of IPV over Women's Lifecourse

- Physical violence was virtually ubiquitous, experienced by more than 95% of the women.
- A majority of women had experienced sexual violence (56.3% of Filipinas and 64.3% of Indians/Pakistanis) and stalking (67.8% of Filipinas and 50.0% of Indian/Pakistani women).
- In general, the probability of experiencing IPV increased rapidly in the early years, peaked in the midto late-twenties, and then gradually declined. An exception to this pattern was found for the probability of experiencing physical violence among Filipina women; Although overall rates of physical violence were lower for Filipinas interviewed at older ages (i.e., those born earlier), 1st generation Filipinas who were older at interview reported increasing levels of physical violence later in the lifecourse (e.g., peaking in the late thirties for women interviewed at 50).
- High levels of IPV were already experienced by some groups at age 16, the first year for which data were collected. Rates at this initial point were especially high for sexual violence among 1.5+ generations of Indian/Pakistani women (estimated at 18%) and for physical violence among 1.5+ generations of Filipinas interviewed at young ages (estimated at 30%).

 Trajectories of IPV varied by immigration/generational position and by cohort/age at interview (see Similarities and Variations Across Immigration/ Generational Position and Similarities and Variations Across Cohort/Age at Interview for details).

Trajectories of Help-Seeking over Women's Lifecourse
Respondents reported help-seeking from four sources:
police, legal assistance, domestic violence (DV) shelters and
non-shelter DV programs.<sup>2</sup>

- Slightly more than half the respondents (51.7% of Filipina and 55.4% of Indian/Pakistani women) had called the police at least once.
- 43.7% of Filipina women and 60.7% of Indian/ Pakistani women had sought legal assistance.
- With respect to DV programs, 25.3% of Filipinas and 41.1% of Indian/Pakistani women had used shelters; and 31.0% of Filipinas and 57.1% of Indian/Pakistani women had used non-shelter DV programs.

We assessed the lifecourse trajectories of three types of IPV-related help-seeking – calling the police, seeking legal assistance, and using DV programs (shelter and non-shelter programs).

- All three types of help-seeking showed similar patterns across the lifecourse, with probabilities of seeking help generally increasing for women who were interviewed at younger ages (i.e., those born more recently) but remaining essentially zero for women interviewed when they were older (i.e., those born earlier).
- The use of legal assistance, but not other types of programs, was associated with cumulative experiences of physical violence in prior years.
- Experience of stalking was associated with all types of help-seeking in the same year among both Filipina and Indian/Pakistani women.
- Experience of physical violence was associated with all types of help-seeking, with the exception of DV program use among Indian/Pakistani women.
- Experiences of sexual violence was only related to calling the police within that same year and not other types of help-seeking.
- Trajectories of help-seeking varied by cohort/age at interview and, to some extent, by immigration/generational position, although the effect of the latter was not significant after controlling for timing of IPV (see Similarities and Variations Across Immigration/Generational Position and Similarities and Variations Across Cohort/Age for details).

¹ In this report, respondents' immigration/generational position were classified into the following two groups: 1st generation—those who immigrated to the United States at age 13 or later, and 1.5+ generations—those who immigrated to the United States before age 13 (often described as 1.5 generation) or those born in the United States (generally referred to as second, third, etc. generation). We used these groups because the life experience of those who came to the United States in their pre-teen years (1.5 generation) may be more similar to the experience of those who were born in the United States (second generation) than to that of those who came as adolescents or as adults (1st generation) (Allensworth, 1997; Myers & Cranford, 1998).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> We combined the use of shelter and non-shelter programs when analyzing trajectories because of relatively low rates of use and substantial overlap between utilization of these two types of programs.

Source and Nature of the Responses Perceived as Helpful

Respondents described the source and the nature of the response they received that they considered most helpful (most helpful response, hereinafter).

- Frequently mentioned sources of the most helpful response included friends and family, DV programs, legal assistance programs, and CJS agencies.
- Frequently mentioned types of responses included information and referrals, as well as tangible/ concrete assistance and emotional support.
- Both the source and nature of the most helpful response varied somewhat by immigration/ generational position and by cohort/age at interview (see Similarities and Variations Across Immigration/ Generational Position and Similarities and Variations Across Cohort/Age at Interview for details).

#### Perceived Barriers to Contacting CJS Agencies

Filipina and Indian/Pakistani women reported a range of factors that compromised their ability and willingness to contact CJS agencies such as the police.

- Frequently mentioned barriers included: lack of knowledge/familiarity with the CJS system; fears about consequences or fears about their safety; shame, concerns about individual and family reputation and privacy; not wanting to jeopardize own or partner's immigration status; hoping their partner or the situation will change and not being ready to call the police; and being threatened and/or prevented by the abuser from calling the police.
- Factors related to family and social networks identified as barriers to help-seeking included concerns for children (e.g., the need for a father) and family members (e.g., not wanting to burden them); and social isolation.
- Barriers to contacting CJS agencies varied somewhat by immigration/generational position (see Similarities and Variations Across Immigration/ Generational Position for details).

#### Similarities and Variations Across Immigration/ Generational Position

- Physical and sexual violence reported by both Filipina and Indian/Pakistani women occurred earlier in the lifecourse among the 1.5+ generations than the 1st generation. Stalking also occurred earlier in the lifecourse for 1.5+ generations of Indian/Pakistani women, although not for Filipinas.
- In general, the risk of experiencing IPV was higher for the 1.5+ generations compared to the 1st generation for both Filipina and Indian/Pakistani women.
- Two types of help, calling the police among Filipina women and seeking legal assistance among Indian/ Pakistani women, were less commonly sought by the 1st generation, compared to the 1.5+ generations; however, once the timing of IPV was accounted for, immigration/generational differences in help seeking were not significant, suggesting that help-seeking per se does not differ by immigration/generational position, although IPV experience does.

- Information and referrals were most frequently mentioned as a most helpful response by both 1st and 1.5+ generations among Filipina and Indian/Pakistani women. The next frequently mentioned responses by the 1.5+ generations were empathic communication and safety planning/advice; These types of response were less frequently viewed as a most helpful response among 1st generation women.
- Perceived barriers to contacting CJS also varied considerably between the two groups of women. Among 1st generation respondents, the most frequently mentioned barriers included: lack of knowledge/familiarity, immigration status, hope for change/not ready, deciding there was no need for police intervention, and fear of consequences/safety. Except for fear of consequences/safety, these reasons were not among the most frequently mentioned for the 1.5+ generations. The 1.5+ generations most frequently mentioned shame/reputation/privacy, fear of consequences/safety, and general fear as reasons for the lack of prior CJS contact.

#### Similarities and Variations by Cohort/Age at Interview

- Cohort effects were found in the risk of stalking for both Filipina and Indian/Pakistani women, with the rate of stalking higher for women who were younger when interviewed (i.e., those born more recently) compared with those who were older when interviewed (i.e., those born earlier).
- Among Filipinas interviewed at younger ages, the 1.5+ generations were much more likely to experience physical violence early in the lifecourse. Among those interviewed at older ages, the 1st generation were more likely to experience physical violence later in the lifecourse. This pattern was in contrast to all other patterns of IPV across the lifecourse, which typically increased rapidly in the early years, peaked in the midto late-twenties, and then gradually declined.
- Help-seeking trajectories varied by cohort/age at interview – in general, women who were interviewed at older ages were less likely than their younger counterparts to seek help from police, legal assistance and DV programs.

## **Important Themes to Consider in the Response to IPV in Asian Communities**

Police/Criminal Justice System Agencies are a Gateway to Assistance

The majority (51.7% of Filipina and 55.4% of Indian/Pakistani respondents) had initiated contact with the police at least once prior to the interview, contrary to general perceptions that Asian battered women do not call the police. IPV experience was positively associated with the likelihood of calling the police in the year in which a woman experienced IPV, although this association was not consistently found for the probability of contacting legal assistance programs or DV programs. The majority of respondents who had contacted both the police and legal assistance programs had contacted the former before contacting the latter. There was a similar pattern

in the use of DV programs – the majority of respondents contacted the police first and then a DV program. Together, these finding suggest that a contact with the police in the immediate aftermath of an IPV incident serve as an entry/gateway to getting in touch with other assistance programs.

#### Importance of Tailoring Programs to Asians

For 1st generation respondents, domestic violence (DV) and legal assistance programs targeted to serve Asians tended to provide the most helpful responses, with 43.5% identifying Asian DV programs and 10.9% identifying Asian legal assistance programs as sources of the most helpful responses. This finding does not mean that programs not tailored to Asian battered women (non-Asian) do not have a role: 14.9% of Filipina women and 28.6% of Indian/Pakistani women contacted non-Asian DV programs, and 2.3% of Filipina women and 5.4% of Indian/Pakistani women sought help from non-Asian legal assistance programs. Given the saliency of socio-cultural barriers among 1.5+ generation women (e.g., shame/reputation/privacy and not burdening natal family), it is important that non-Asian agencies attend to socio-cultural factors pertinent to Asian battered women and tailor assistance programs to meet their needs.

## Multi-Dimensional Support: Need for Tangible/Concrete and Emotionally Supportive Help

A multi-dimensional approach to providing support was perceived as most helpful. Information and Referral (I&R), which were most frequently mentioned as the most helpful response by Filipinas and Indians/Pakistanis of both 1st and 1.5+ generations. In addition, multi-dimensions encompass tangible/concrete assistance (e.g., a place to stay, monetary help, help with child care, and food) and emotional support, safety planning/advice that promoted safety (e.g., encouraging victims to call police), and a range of responses that can be loosely categorized as "women-centered responses."

#### Importance of Relational Aspects of Helping

Respondents emphasized the importance of listening to, believing, and understanding the survivor; refraining from pressuring the survivor; not making victim-blaming comments; not stereotyping the survivor; and not making assumptions about the survivor or the cultural group or community to which she belongs. Their recommendations mirror one of the most helpful responses described by many respondents – empathic communication and displays of caring/concern.

#### Socio-Culturally Informed and Competent Responses

Respondents iterated how critical cultural competency was. They pointed to the importance of individual officers and staff of various agencies being informed about the socio-cultural values and norms that influence the types of IPV perpetrated and women's willingness and ability to seek outside assistance. In addition to these individual-level changes, respondents suggested increased staffing and training and collaboration with Asian domestic violence programs and other non-CJS programs to strengthen the CJS agencies' organizational capacity to work more effectively with Asian battered women.

#### **Methodological Strengths and Limitations**

The combination of Life History Calendar (LHC) methods for data collection and multilevel modeling (MLM) approaches to data analysis is a promising strategy for examining women's experience of IPV across the lifecourse. LHC interview methods offer improvements in memory cuing and recall, and MLM analysis makes full use of LHC data. Both are flexible and can be used to examine lifecourse trajectories of many types of experiences, including many of the issues pertinent to CJS agencies, such as crime perpetration and victimization, arrests, prosecutions, and sentences (Yoshihama & Bybee, in press).

This study makes an important contribution to the examination of cohort effect, which has not been extensively investigated in IPV research. One of the strengths of the MLM approach is the ability to examine the cohort effects, as well as the effects of substantive covariates while adjusting for cohort effects due to differences in respondents' ages at the time of the interview. This study did indeed find substantial cohort effects in the lifecourse trajectories of IPV experience. Effects attributable to cohort may reflect several processes, including recall biases, historical shifts in women's perceptions of what acts "count" as IPV, agerelated differences in willingness to disclose IPV, or actual cohort differences in the level and timing of IPV, which may be related to changing relationship type or timing. The study also found substantial cohort effects on the probability of seeking help, which may reflect historical changes in availability of assistance programs and resources. More research is needed to examine these possible influences. Regardless of the source of these effects, it is important that analyses of self-report lifecourse data use methods such as MLM that can examine and control for cohort influences, both as a main effect and in interaction with other variables of interest.

This study used a non-probability sample recruited by community outreach efforts. This is consistent with the project's main purpose: to enhance the understanding of the lifecourse trajectories of Asian battered women's experiences of IPV and contact with CJS agencies and non-CJS programs, including an examination of barriers to contacting CJS agencies. Multi-method recruitment strategies resulted in obtaining a sample of women from a wide range of backgrounds. However, due to the use of a non-probability sample, the generalizability of the study's findings is limited. Generalizability beyond the experiences of the three selected Asian ethnic groups is also limited, yet this represents a strength of this study because it avoided the problem of aggregating the data from women of different ethnic backgrounds whose experiences may differ considerably.

## Recommendations for Strengthening CJS Responses to IPV in Asian Communities

Based on the study's findings, we present the following recommendations for strengthening CJS responses to IPV in Asian communities, along with next steps for future research.

CJS Responses to Asian Survivors/Victims

**Recommendation #1: Adopt an integrated response model.** We recommend that police officers adopt an integrated response model that combines legal and support-oriented approaches to cases. This can be achieved by training police officers on an integrated response model; co-locating advocacy and support services within police departments much as what family justice centers do; and enhancing coordinated community responses (CCR) with collaboration between law enforcement and advocates providing socio-culturally and linguistically tailored programs.

Recommendation #2: Identify high-risk and/or under-served groups and develop tailored intervention approaches. The findings of this study point to substantial within-group variations in the lifecourse trajectories of IPV and help-seeking by women's age, immigration/ generational position and cohort. For example, this study identified certain groups - e.g., Filipino, Indian and Pakistani adolescents and young adults - to be at a higher risk of experiencing IPV. It also found that some groups (e.g., older cohort) were less likely to contact CJS agencies than others. We recommend that CJS agencies analyze the demographics of the communities they serve to identify salient subgroups to whom targeted and/or tailored approaches may be necessary in order to reach out to them and to encourage help-seeking. CJS personnel should also understand the barriers Asian women face and how they can address them.

Recommendation #3: Assess for stalking at all IPV incidents and at all points of contact with victims. Given the high prevalence of stalking and a significant association of experiences of stalking and help-seeking found in this study, all CJS agencies, particularly law enforcement and investigation units, should include questions about stalking when taking reports, giving it as much weight as physical and sexual violence.

Assessment for stalking should be included as one type of IPV regardless of whether the couple is separated or estranged.

Recommendation #4: Design policies, practices and resources about IPV in Asian adolescent and young adult relationships that take socio-cultural prohibitions against dating into account. Such policies and procedures are indicated by the study's results that women are at risk of IPV earlier in their lifecourse. CJS responses to Asian adolescents and young adults reporting IPV should assess how parents might respond to victims and what procedures will preserve confidentiality and safety for adolescent and young adult victims.

Recommendation #5: Train CJS on abuses related to immigration status and how to address community and victim fears about immigration-related issues and the rights of immigrants. All CJS agencies should be trained about abuse related to immigration status so that they can understand, respond to and investigate these abuses; consider safety implications and consequential impacts on children and adult family members; and be familiar with legal remedies available to

immigrant crime victims. In addition, because immigration-related fears are barriers to help-seeking, police officers should be trained to identify and address fears such as threats of deportation; how immigrants' experiences of calling police in their home countries affect their current attitudes toward seeking help from police; and how this can confer greater impunity to batterers.

Recommendation #6: Make I&R (Information & Referral) assistance integral to outreach and advocacy. CJS agencies are an important gateway to additional resources in battered women's long and winding trajectories of help-seeking. Recognizing the importance of I&R to victims, CJS personnel should provide and publicize up-to-date resources and referrals for battered women and explanations about such services.

#### Collaboration and Outreach

Recommendation #7: Implement collaborative procedures for mutual training, problem-solving, and capacity building. Specific recommendations include (a) CJS agencies should design trainings for advocates to deepen their understanding of CJS policies and procedures; (b) Domestic violence programs serving Asians should design trainings that improve CJS practices and strengthen CJS agencies' capacity to meeting the needs of Asian communities; and (c) CJS agency representatives and community-based-organizations should establish procedures to identify and address problems that arise in responding to cases of IPV in a spirit of collaboration instead of confrontation.

Recommendation #8: Promote reporting of IPV and demystify CJS responses through enhanced community outreach and explanations of CJS roles and procedures.

Some survivors' comments indicated that they did not fully understand the criminal justice system. Demystifying the CJS would help reduce victim fears and batterer manipulation, which in turn could considerably encourage help-seeking.

Recommendation #9: Include Asian programs in multi-disciplinary and/or CCR teams. Domestic violence programs and legal assistance programs, especially those tailored to Asians, play an important role in the lives of the 1st generation Asian battered women. These programs are often at the forefront of innovative strategies to address diverse needs of their communities. Their inclusion and input into Coordinated Community Response teams will benefit all members of multi-disciplinary teams.

Recommendation #10: Collaborate with community based organizations in a manner that does not burden but strengthens their capacity. We recommend that CJS agencies invest in collaborative efforts without burdening community-based organizations, e.g., expecting bilingual advocates or ad hoc interpreters to obviate the need for professional interpreters. Small community-based-organizations have limited resources, yet provide hours of unfunded services to other programs. We recommend that CJS agencies budget funds in order to integrate collaboration with community-based-organizations – such funds are available through VAWA's STOP funding and Grants to Encourage Community Solutions (formerly, Grants to Encourage Arrests).

Systems Change

Recommendation #11: Understand how the culture of CJS agencies can adversely affect victims and make changes that maximize benefits to victims. Respondents in this study pointed out that some attitudes and behaviors of CJS personnel (e.g., lack of empathy, emphasizing only the legal aspects of policies and procedures) were alienating. An important step for CJS agencies to improving their responses to Asian and other ethnic communities is to understand how their own culture affects battered women. We recommend that CJS agencies engage in a critical analysis of their agency's culture because such an organizational/cultural audit can help develop strategies to minimize its deleterious effects and maximize its salutary ones. Thus, changes to CJS culture can help obviate negative community perceptions, fear, distrust, and decreased willingness in help-seeking, benefits that community policing in fact aim for.

Recommendation #12: Enhance cultural competencies of CJS agencies at both individual and organizational levels. Improving the cultural competency of individual CJS personnel is important; however, more attention needs to be paid to cultural competency at the organizational level. Without organizational commitment to serving Asian, and other, communities, training individual personnel on cultural competency will not have a lasting impact.

Recommendation #13: Increase language access through provision of interpretation services. All programs receiving federal funds (directly or indirectly) are obligated to comply with Title VI and provide meaningful access to victims and litigants with limited English proficiency. We recommend that CJS agencies conduct the 4-factor analysis in the DOJ Guidance to Federal Financial Assistance Recipients Regarding Title VI Prohibition Against National Origin Discrimination Affecting Limited English Proficient Persons. All CJS agency personnel, as well as advocates in community-based-organizations, should be trained in working with spoken and sign language interpreters.

#### **Next Steps for Future Research**

Additional studies of lifecourse trajectories of IPV and help-seeking need to be conducted to examine whether the relationships observed for Filipina and Indian/Pakistani women are similar or different for other groups of Asian and other under-studied population groups. That said, moving beyond examination of across-group differences, elucidation of significant within-group variations in IPV remains an important area for future research. Given that variance in IPV trajectories was not completely explained by the model that included the respondent's age, age at interview, and immigration/generational position, future research should examine additional factors associated with variations in IPV risks. Additional areas of future research include detailed studies of IPV among Asian youth; analyzing the interrelationships among various types of IPV: changing IPV risks across relationship phases, and exploring factors that explain the general decline in IPV risk during the later years of the lifecourse.

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