



Bridging Refugee Youth & Children's Services

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The Coalition for Asian American Children and Families

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New York, NY

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The Coalition for Asian American Children and Families New York, NY

❖ Challenging
Stereotypes

❖ Connecting Communities
and Policy Makers

❖ Empowering parents to
advocate for their children

- CHILD WELFARE
- MENTAL HEALTH
 - EDUCATION

Goals of Presentation

- To promote broader understanding of Asian American community in NYC
- To highlight how language, culture, and immigrant experience affect:
 - Family functioning
 - Help seeking behavior
 - Attitudes toward mental health
- *Only making generalizations!!!*

Who are Asian Americans?

- At least 29 ethnic groups in US
- Origins in East, South, Southeast Asia
- Different levels of migrations and generations
- Also: mixed families, adoptees, unaccompanied minors
- Not all identify as “Asian American”

Myth of the “Model Minority”

- 36% of AA adults have college degree, BUT 24% don't have HS degree
- Overall poverty is 18%, BUT among ethnicities ranges 6%~40%
- Highest work force participation, BUT chronic underemployment
- 53% of Asian American births covered by Medicaid

Linguistic and Social Isolation

- 96% children living in immigrant households
- 46% households are linguistically isolated
- Long work hours limit ability to learn English or understand broader culture

Developing an Asian American Identity

- Bias based on race, ethnicity, time of arrival, and language
- Experience of “becoming a minority”
- Expectations of race relations in US
- Lack of images in daily life, school curriculum, pop culture, media
- Dual identity

Impact of Immigration

- Take into account family's immigration history
- Fear of immigration authorities
- Special concerns of undocumented youth

Relationships with Authority Figures

- Greater respect for teachers, doctors, etc.
- Less likely to question authority or be assertive
- May tell the authority figure what they want to hear

Help~Seeking Behavior

- Delay seeking help
- Less likely to go outside family
- Problems as reflection of family
- Taboo topics (e.g., sexuality, mental illness, child abuse) avoided
- May use traditional medicine or drugs from home country

Barriers in Accessing Health Care

- Cost and availability
- Language/culture barriers
- Unfamiliarity with systems
- Providers have misconceptions regarding Asian Americans
- Level of education make advanced concepts difficult

Reasons for Migration (non-nomadic)

- Voluntary
 - Signifying the desire for improvement of family situations
- Involuntary

Voluntary Migration to the US: reasons include hope for increased

- Educational opportunities
- Economic, job, and other lifestyle opportunities
- Social or political freedoms and equalities – especially in the practice of religion or culture
- Ability to be close to relatives already settled in the US
- Safety and/or peace (fleeing from war or torture as a refugee or asylee)

Strengths of immigrant families

- **Willpower** (to uproot themselves from the familiar and resettle in a new land)
- **Motivation and drive** to better their lives
- **Willingness** to work hard
- **Perspective** gained from hardship or struggle
- **Readiness** to learn in order to survive
- **Cohesiveness** within family and community

Day-to-Day Challenges and Obstacles

- Cultural differences
- Religious differences
- Limited English proficiency
- Immigration status issues
- Stereotypes and racism
- Increasing poverty and housing issues
- General stress of resettling

Systemic and Community obstacles compound issues

- Overall government and public systems' inability to reach and serve newer immigrant populations
 - Lack of mainstream understanding and integration of communities and cultures (cultural competence)
 - Lack of appropriate/accessible outreach and educational efforts to communities
 - Stereotypes and misunderstanding
 - Lack of language capacity (interpretation/translation)
- Lack of community based service infrastructure
 - Limited capacity, knowledge, and integration of community based organizations (CBOs)
 - “Service poor” communities

How does this play out in immigrant families and impact children?

- Social isolation and lack of trust
- Identity issues
- Community safety concerns
- Misunderstanding of mainstream expectations and suffering from punitive consequences
- Little to no access to a 'safety net' – disabling capacity to work through challenging situations and times
- Higher risk for 'normal' family challenges to escalate to debilitating levels (resulting in child abuse, addiction, domestic violence, mental health issues, etc.)

KEY Definitions

- **Culture:** Compilation of philosophies, family practices, religion, and traditional values.
- **Race:** US Census Bureau defines race as a social/political construct - not biological or genetic in nature. The categories of Race are White, Black or African American, American Indian and Alaska Native, Asian, and Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander. The definition reflects self-identification by people according to what group they most closely identify with.
- **Ethnicity:** As defined by the Census Bureau, the heritage, nationality group, lineage, or country of birth of the person or the person's parents or ancestors before their arrival in the United States.
- **Nationality:** The status of belonging to a particular nation either by origin, birth, or naturalization.
- **Region:** Subsection of country - possibly divided by geographic boundaries, political boundaries, climate, etc.

Current Statistics on API American Children & Youth

- 88% of Asians and Pacific Islanders are either foreign-born themselves or have at least one foreign-born parent.
- 96% of Asians and Pacific islanders live in a metropolitan area.
- 3.3 million Asian Americans under age 18. The number for native Hawaiians and other Pacific islanders was 330,900.
- Urban Asian demographics differ from suburban demographics:

NOTE:

City/State employees of Departments of Youth and Family Services/Children's Services are NOT mandated to report undocumented immigrants to the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS)

Traditional Values Common in Asian American Families

(from Transcultural Child Development: Psychological Assessment & Treatment. Johnson., Powell G. and J. Yamamoto, eds. Chapter 10, "Korean American Children" Kim, W.J., Kim, L.I., and Rue, D.S.)

Collectivism compared to *Individualism*

- Apologizing for your children's bad behavior
- Personal actions reflect upon the larger family

Vertical Family Structure compared to *Horizontal Family Structure*

- Deferring to an elder of the household, even if one disagrees.
- Females holding less authority in families

Family-Oriented compared to *Individual-Oriented*

- Home belongs to all extended family, no matter where or who they are.
- Arranged Marriage

Interdependence compared to *Independence*

- Placing earnings/wage in an extended family "pool"
- Going to school and working in order to better the whole family

Indirect expression compared to *Direct expression*

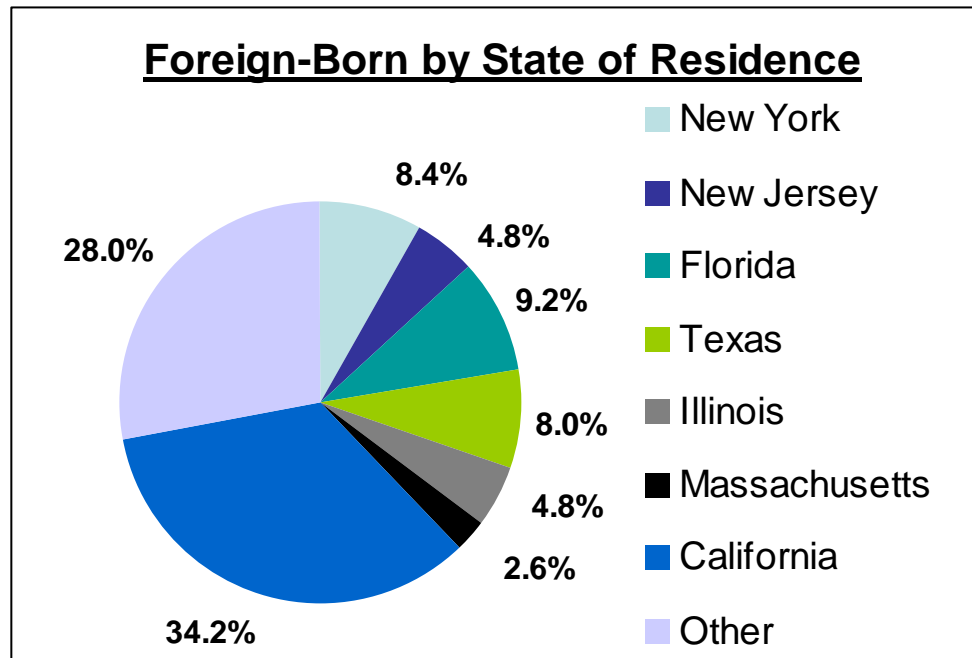
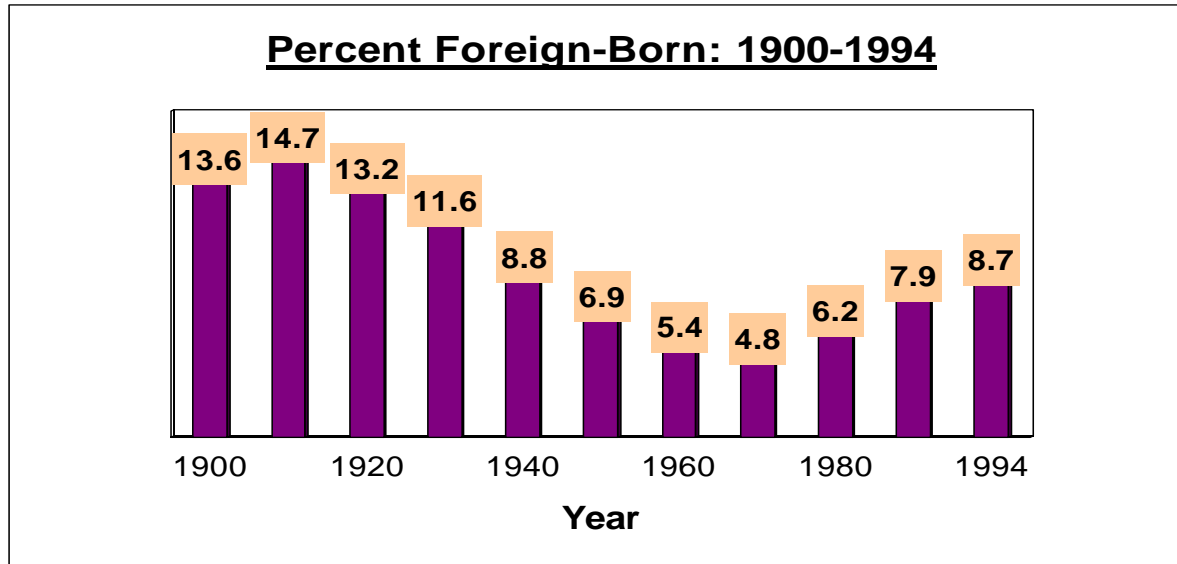
- Expressing love for people through actions, NOT verbalizing, "I love you"
- Never showing public displays of affection

Responsive compared to *Assertive*

- Adjusting to a bad situation, not trying to change it
- Addressing offensive actions (towards you) by walking away from the situation

Why is immigration relevant to child welfare?

1. The US immigrant population is rising.



Source: U.S. Department of Commerce, Economics and Statistics Administration, "Current Population Reports," P20-486, August 1995

Divergent Cultures/Immigration $\Leftarrow ? \Rightarrow$ Child Abuse

1. **Possible increased risk of family stress leading to abusive behaviors.**
 - Challenges of immigration and acculturation
 - Isolation and fear

2. **A lack of understanding of US rules/regulations around abuse/neglect**
 - Different ideas of what is and is not okay in disciplining and raising children

3. **Possible underreporting of abusive situations by family or community members.**
 - Different cultural norms around disclosure of “family matters”
 - Fear of the “government” and being reported
 - Family or community unfamiliar with system and how to report.

How can I assure competence in trying to understand and work with an immigrant family?

CULTURE

- Philosophies
- Practices (family, community, health)
- Religion
- Traditional Values

RESOURCES

- Language Ability
- Educational Level
- Support Structure
- Finances

FAMILY HISTORY

- Immigration History (how, why, who, came and when)
- Immigration Status
- Acculturation

What can I do as a service provider or advocate?

1. **BUILD UNDERSTANDING**
 - Communities and cultures
 - Language needs
2. **USE AN INTERPRETER**
3. **MAKE EDUCATED ASSESSMENTS**
 - Consider the multiple aspects of a families' cultures, languages, histories, or immigration statuses
4. **EXPLAIN THE SYSTEM AND SPREAD UNDERSTANDING**
 - To community and family members
 - To fellow professionals
5. **BE SENSITIVE ABOUT IMMIGRATION STATUS OF FAMILY MEMBERS**

An Alternative

- CACF promotes and practices a Community Based Approach – partnering with direct service CBOs and Informal Service structures
 - CBOs have established relationships/trust with communities and families – often springing up from within and by community stakeholders
 - CBOs have consistent contact with families
 - CBOs can better understand, capture and utilise family and community strengths
 - CBOs have their fingers on the pulse – knowledge of community issues and concerns (data)

Community:

What you are in may give you a way out

A group:

- That is **relevant**
- That **serves a purpose** in one's life
- That one **identifies with** or that **understands that person:**
 - Shared experience
 - Shared ethnicity
 - Shared geography
 - Shared interests
 - Shared identity
- That may **provide support** - formal or informal

Informal Service Networks consist of valid and viable community resources, social supports, and services present in communities and utilised by community members, that are not necessarily known outside that particular community, or thought of as standard or government/public agency sanctioned forms of social support.

Informal service networks can be helpful to your work with Asian American families for three general reasons:

- As potential resources in helping to understand a family, gather needed information, or explore important factors related to culture and religion, language, and family history.
- As potential resources in helping families themselves understand the system they are involved in.
- As actual providers of needed services to families.

WHO MIGHT BE PART OF AN INFORMAL SERVICE NETWORK?

- Religious/faith-based leaders and community supporters (i.e. Catholic pastors, Imams, Hindu priests, etc.),
- Traditional medics/herbalists/healers,
- Community or cultural centers, civic associations, professional associations (i.e. NY Taxi workers assoc.),
- Immigrant community leaders, home-village based associations.

Success: Towards a community base

- Be physically location in community
- Allow for target community to participates in the running of the agency
- Develop out of community need/Conduct Needs Assessments
 - Foundations in community
 - Have programs reflect actual needs of community
 - Relevancy and Inclusivity
- Gain a better understanding of community needs and how to address the community (cultural and language competency)
- Partner/Collaborate with other community stakeholders
 - Service providers
 - Schools and libraries
 - Community leaders
 - Government representatives