

# Demographics: Asians in America

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## Demographic trend

<1 million Asians (1960): 0.5% of US population

12.5 million Asians (2000): 4.4% of US population

## Major Asian Groups

1. Non-Taiwanese Chinese (2,314,537)
2. Filipino (1,850,314)
3. Asian Indian (1,678,765)
4. Vietnamese (1,122,528)
5. Korean (1,076,872)
6. Japanese (796,700)
7. Cambodian (171,937)

(U.S. Census Bureau, 2002)

# Asian Americans in California

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- 3.8 million Asian/Pacific Islanders in California in 2000.
- 1.3 million Asian/Pacific Islanders in Los Angeles County (12.2% of the total Los Angeles County population)
- Over one third of the Asian/Pacific population in California resides within Los Angeles County.

(U.S. Census Bureau, 2003d)

# Education Among Asian Americans

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- 87% of the Asian/Pacific Islanders aged 25 and older had earned at least a high school diploma (U.S. Census Bureau, 2003).
- Variance range among Asian subgroups with a high school or higher education
  - 31% for Hmong (low)
  - 88% for Japanese (high)
- Asian/Pacific Islanders were almost twice as likely to have less than a 9<sup>th</sup> grade education (7%) than non-Hispanic Whites (4%)

# Asian Cultural Characteristics

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- Emphasis on hierarchical order within the family
- Respect for seniors
- Family obligations, filial piety
- Obedience to rules and authority.
- Highly male-dominant (expecting wives and children subservient to patriarchal authority)
- Children are expected unquestioning obedience to their parents' needs and wishes.

# Parenting Practice Among Immigrant Asians

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- Physical punishment at home and at school is generally permitted and considered necessary as a way to discipline children.
- Child maltreatment is not viewed as a serious social issue and no well-defined statute exists to prevent or intervene in child maltreatment in most countries of origin.
- Asian immigrants tend to define only an extremely harmful physical punishment such as skull fractures and severe burn cases as child abuse

# Parenting Practice Among Immigrant Asians (cont'd)

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- Many Asians believe that physical punishment of their children for a disciplinary purpose could not constitute a child abuse case.
- The concept of child abuse within the family and public intervention in private family matters for the sake of child protection is rather foreign and unacceptable to many immigrant Asian families.

(Song, 1986)

# Some Characteristics of Asian Child Maltreatment Victims

<b>Type of Abuse</b>	<b>N = 761</b>	
Physical abuse		304 (39.9%)
Neglect		213 (28.0%)
Emotional abuse		83 (10.9%)
Sexual abuse		33 ( 4.3%)
Substantial risk for abuse		128 (16.8%)
<b>Gender</b>	<b>N = 760</b>	
Male		369 (48.6%)
Female		391 (51.4%)
<b>Age</b>	<b>N = 754</b>	<b>Mean= 9.5 Years (SD=6.5)</b>
1-5 years		186 (24.4%)
6- 10 years		252 (33.1%)
11-15 years		238 (31.3%)
16-18 years		78 (10.2%)

# Asian Perpetrators of Child Maltreatment

## Relationship to Victim

**N = 757**

Father	220 (28.9%)
Mother	305 (40.1%)
Both parents	130 (17.1%)
Stepparents	63 ( 8.3%)
Relatives	33 ( 4.3%)
Other	6 ( 0.8%)

## Educational Level

**N = 761**

**Mean=9.0 Years (SD=7.2)**

Less than elementary school	205 (26.9%)
Middle school	22 ( 2.9%)
High school	209 (27.5%)
College	123 (16.2%)
Graduate or professional school	19 ( 2.5%)
Unknown	183 (24.0%)

# Asian Perpetrators of Child Maltreatment (cont'd)

<b>Circumstances and Family Problems</b>	<b>N = 741</b>
Excessive discipline	192 (25.2%)
Divorce/separation related family problem	166 (21.8%)
Incapable of providing care	107 (14.1%)
Domestic violence	106 (13.9%)
Poor parenting skills	74 ( 9.7%)
Unemployment/financial problems	50 ( 7.9%)
Parents substance abuse/gambling	24 ( 3.2%)
Parent(s) mental illness	16 ( 2.1%)
Other	6 ( 0.8%)

# Characteristics of Asian Pacific Child Maltreatment

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- Immigrant Asian families are more likely to be charged with physical abuse and neglect, and far less likely to be charged with sexual abuse in comparison with all other groups charged with abuse and neglect in the U.S. population.
- Biological parents abused the majority of victims--mothers (40.1%), biological father (28.9%) and both parents (17.1%)
- Circumstances under which physical abuse occurred most frequently were corporal punishment used by Asian parents with an intention to discipline their children and stressful family situations attributable to divorce, single parenthood, and remarriage.

# Characteristics of Asian Child Maltreatment cont'd)

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- Child neglect and emotional abuse is another prevalent type of child abuse in this study: the most frequent circumstance under which emotional abuse occurred among the Asian families, was children's witnessing domestic violence
- There are slight differences among various Asian subgroups in characteristics of child abuse. For example, physical abuse is the most prevalent abuse type for Chinese, Korean, and Vietnamese families, while child neglect is the most frequently reported abuse for Cambodians
- Emergency status, referral source, type of abuse, and chronicity of abuse were statistically significant in predicting out of home placement.

# Cambodian Americans

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- **171,937 Cambodians in the United States in 2000.**
- **70,232 (just over 40% of all U.S. Cambodians) live in California.**
- **36,233 live in Los Angeles, Riverside, and Orange Counties.**

**(U.S Census Bureau, 2000a)**

# Historical Background

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- Independence from France in 1953 (under French administrative control between 1863 and 1953).
- In 1955, King Sihanouk played a direct political role through the Popular Socialist Community.
- In 1970 during his absence overseas, Sihanouk was overthrown by Lon Nol in a pro-U.S. military coup.
- Between 1972 and 1973 Cambodia underwent a period of a massive U.S. bombing in which over half a million tons were dropped.

# Historical Background (cont'd)

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- From 1975 through 1979 the Khmer Rouge took power; this communist regime was brutal in their attempts to totally change society and restore the agricultural base—1-3 million people were estimated to be killed – “Killing Fields”.
- Cambodian refugees fled to refugee camps in Thailand that had been established since 1975.
- During the process, many died of malnutrition, starvation, and exposure to many diseases. Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and survival guilt are some of the major psychological symptoms experienced by Cambodian refugees.

# Mental Health Problems Among Cambodian Americans

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- 86% of the Cambodians in the sample met the modified criteria of the DSM III-R for PTSD.
- 96% had high dissociation scores.
- 80% could be classified as meeting the criteria for clinical depression.

(Blair, 2000)

# Adjustment Problems Among Cambodian Americans

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- Many refugees struggled to find employment.
- Nearly all Cambodians receive public assistance during their first 12 months as refugees in the United States.
- In 1999, 40% of Cambodians received public assistance and the same proportion of the population lived below the poverty line in Los Angeles County
- Families at greater risk for child abuse and neglect due to unstable job or employment, inadequate housing, and other stressful life conditions.

# Chinese Americans

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- First Asian group to immigrate to the United States
- Largest Asian group (2,314,537 non-Taiwanese Chinese)
- Fastest growing ethnic group among various Asian groups

(U. S. Bureau of Census, 2002)

# Chinese Immigration History

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## First-wave immigration:

- Discovery of gold in California in 1848 initiated a massive influx of Chinese immigrants (over 225,000 Chinese over the next three decades).
- Mostly poor, single males employed as cheap labor
- Racist legislation nearly extinguished the presence of families and second/third generations from American soil for the next 100 years

# Chinese Immigration History (cont'd)

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## Second-wave immigration:

- Brought families and parents, propelled by the 1965 Immigration Act
- Much more within-group diversity (e.g., many college educated, white collar jobs, and Chinese with minimal to no education from Southeast Asian countries)

(Zhou, 1999)

# Korean Immigrants

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- More than 1 million Koreans in the U.S. in 2000
- The post-1965 immigrants are highly educated, urban, with middle-class backgrounds
- Downward occupational mobility due to lack of English skills and experience in the U.S.
- One third of Korean immigrant households nationwide engage in self-employed labor-intensive small businesses

(Min, 1998)

# Vietnamese Americans

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- 1,122,528 Vietnamese across the United States in 2000 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2002)
- 447,032 Vietnamese residing in California in 2000
- Half of them (233,573) are concentrated in the Los Angeles and Orange Counties area

(Pfeifer, 2001)

# Immigration Patterns of Vietnamese Americans

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- First wave refugees came from April 1975 to 1978; predominantly middle-class background with a high level of educational attainment in South Vietnam.
- Second wave cohorts came from late 1978 to the present and were generally younger, less educated, and much less able to speak English than the first wave. Significant adjustment difficulties in United States.
- Increased risk for developing mental health problems such as Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, major depression, adjustment disorder, and various other psychosomatic ailments.