



Vocalizing the Unspoken: Asian American Women and Girls Behavioral Health Needs

By Victoria Benson, Coro Fellow
San Francisco Mental Health Board

Background Information

- Coro Center for Civic Leadership
- San Francisco Mental Health Education Funds, Inc.
- GABHS for Gals
 - Gender-Appropriate and Culturally Competent Behavioral Health Services for Women, Girls, and Families

Agencies and Services Interviewed

Interviewed 21 clinicians and directors at 12 different programs

- **Asian American Recovery Services**
 - ADAPT
 - Lee Woodward Counseling Center
- **Chinatown Child Development Center**
- **Chinatown/North Beach Mental Health Services**
- **Community Youth Center**
- **Filipino Community Center**
- **Japanese Community Youth Council
Asian Youth Prevention Service (AYPS)**
- **Richmond Area Multi-Services (RAMS)**
 - Children, Youth, and Family Services - Wellness Center
 - Adult Outpatient and Prevention Services
- **San Francisco General Hospital
Psychiatric Inpatient 7B**
- **Sunset Mental Health Service
Outpatient**
- **Vietnamese Youth Development Center**

The Story of Mei



Agenda

- Demographics
- Pressures
- Behavioral Health Risks
- Needs
- Where Are We Now?
- Best Practices and Strengths



Demographics

- Chinese Immigrant
- Chinese American
- Vietnamese Immigrant/Refugee
- Vietnamese American
- Filipino Immigrant
- Filipino American
- Japanese American
- Cambodian Immigrant/Refugee

Immigrant or American Born?

- Types of pressures and stressors depend on the age the woman immigrated
 - Born here?
 - Younger than 8?
 - Between 9 and 18?
 - As an adult?

Demographics

Pressures

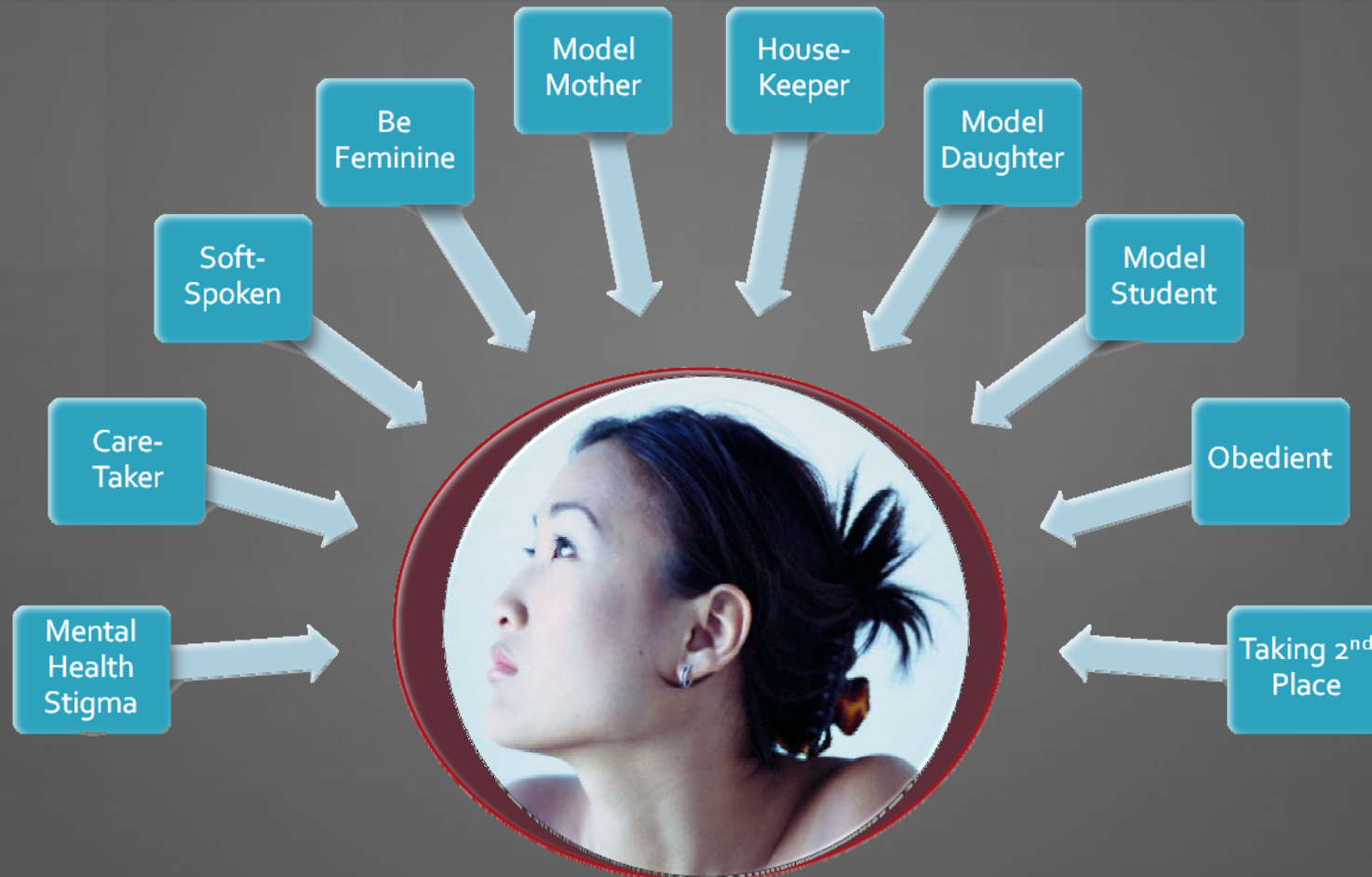
Risks

Needs

Now?

Best Practices

Cultural and Societal Pressures



Demographics

Pressures

Risks

Needs

Now?

Best Practices

Cultural and Societal Pressures

Voices from Agency Staff and Clinicians

- On the Stigma
 - *"There's a huge stigma. Chinese [people] think of mental health as being crazy and violent – they do not see depression as a mental health issue."*
- On Taking 2nd Place
 - *"Boys have always been a little bit more 'treasured' in Chinese culture – they are always like the little emperor – and are treated better than girls. So they took second place in the family."*

Demographics

Pressures

Risks

Needs

Now?

Best Practices

Behavioral Health Risks

- Lack of agency to communicate needs
- Psychosomatic presentation of behavioral health issues
- Pattern of binge alcohol and/or drug abuse
- Avoid seeking services
- Depression
- Anxiety
- Suicidal tendencies

Demographics

Pressures

Risks

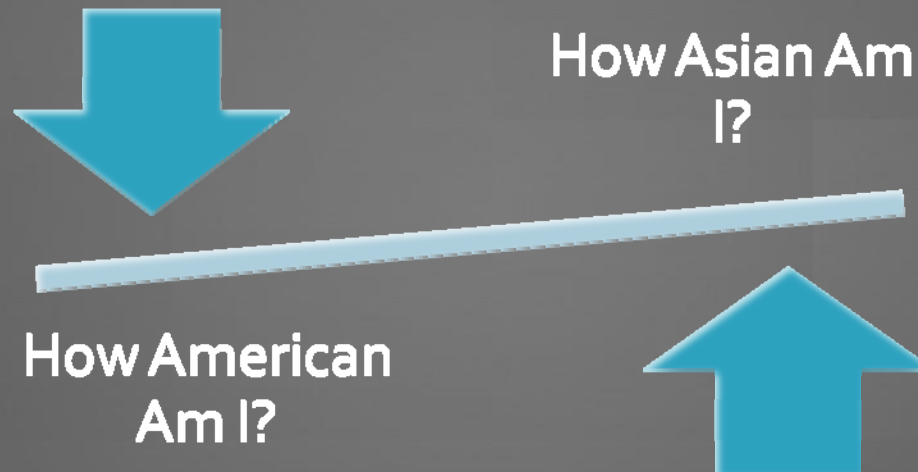
Needs

Now?

Best Practices

Asian Girls and Adolescent Needs

“No (wo)man’s land” – Identity Development



“Oh my gosh, they’re such FOBS, I don’t want to hang out with them’, you know that’s how it is, you already see that divide. Even though [we both speak Chinese], I won’t [talk to him] because you either want to be more Americanized [and] you better stay that way, or if you are [more] Chinese, then you stick with that group.”

Demographics

Pressures

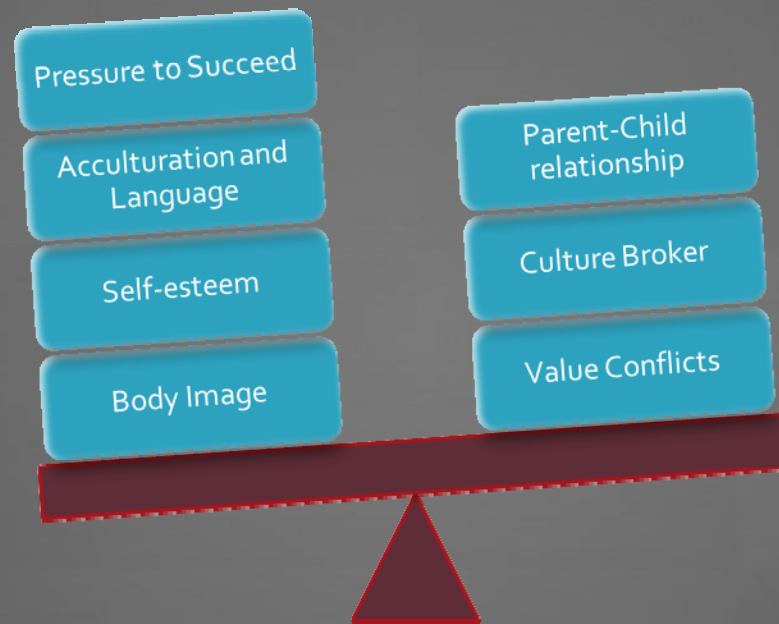
Risks

Needs

Now?

Best Practices

Asian Girls and Adolescent Needs



Behavioral Health Risk

- * Anxiety
- * Depression
- * Low-Self-Esteem
- * Cutting
- * Risky Relationship Behaviors

Demographics

Pressures

Risks

Needs

Now?

Best Practices

Asian Women Needs

- Working the Double Shift
- Ability to Acculturate
- Role Reversal
 - Becoming the breadwinner
 - Becoming dependent on children
- Domestic Violence
- Issues of control and expectations

Demographics

Pressures

Risks

Needs

Now?

Best Practices

Unique Needs of Asian Ethnic Groups

- Filipina Women exploited by job demand and pressure from family

War Refugees: Cambodian and Vietnamese Women

"They don't have the basic family structure because of war so you see a lot of family members who have particular stress and trauma."

- Trauma
 - Dealing with death, war, and starting over
- Lack of support system
 - Forced to flee

Demographics

Pressures

Risks

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Best Practices

Unique Need of Asian Ethnic Groups

- Japanese community – rejuvenating community cohesiveness
- Socioeconomic status of family
- Chinese rural parent and child conflict on definition of education
 - Staying home vs. Extra curricular activities
- “Escort Service” and materialistic behaviors in Immigrant Chinese girls
 - *“I don’t have to do much, I just go with this guy and he’ll buy me a Coach bag and he’ll buy me an [expensive] necklace.”*

Demographics

Pressures

Risks

Needs

Now?

Best Practices

Where are we now?

- Silence during interviews
- Need more conscious thought and effort on gender appropriate services
- More conscious thought on implementing culturally proficient services
- Need more funding
 - Many women and culture focused programs cut

Demographics

Pressures

Risks

Needs

Now?

Best Practices

Where are we now?

- Asian female body type stereotypes possibly leading to under-diagnosis of eating disorders
 - *"I think [body image standards] are a lot stricter. Back in their own country they are supposed to be really thin."*
- School personnel assumptions about Asian female student population is barrier to providing services
 - *"The schools are out of touch with what Asian girls are doing [on sexual activity and "escort service" trend] and assume those issues are only with other student populations...they do not have enough support for the API girls."*

Demographics

Pressures

Risks

Needs

Now?

Best Practices

Best Practices/Strengths

- Strong Women Role Model: Vietnamese culture celebrates women warriors
- Asian women more willing to breach this subject
- Education to overcome the stigma
- Proximity to Behavioral Health Services
 - Only 20 % of Asians accessing community services
 - Wellness initiative increased number to 35%

Demographics

Pressures

Risks

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Now?

Best Practices

Best Practices/Strengths

- One-on-one sessions paired with family therapy
 - *"Our best practice is working with the family and bridging that [communication and culture] gap."*
- Promoting bicultural in community
 - *"Understanding there are different values and empowering children to support both perspectives."*
- Meeting clients where they are
 - Community centers provide "hang out space"
 - *"Building therapeutic alliance is very important and the first step in our treatment process."*

Demographics

Pressures

Risks

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Now?

Best Practices

Best Practices/Strengths

- Building Trust
- Normalizing their Experiences
- Cultural Proficiency: Informed Not Knowing
- Girls and Women Groups:
 - Filipina groups: Babae, Kapihan
 - Community Youth Center groups: YAWAV, SAVE
 - Lee Woodward Counseling Center

Demographics

Pressures

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Best Practices



Thank you!

Questions?