Cultural Considerations & Suggestions

For Service Providers Working With Family Violence In Chinese Families
Partnering Organizations:

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Cover photo by Rhodri Jones
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Your comments, questions and feedback on this material are welcome. Please contact the project coordinator, Anna Cheung, via

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Chinese Community Response to Family Violence Project

- Introduction
- Project Background
- Project Objectives
- Cultural Considerations and Cultural Competency
- Definition of Family Violence

Note On Cultural Limitations:

The Chinese are a very diverse ethnic group. There are many sub ethnic groups and each group has their own dialect, cultural norms, and values. The influence of Chinese traditional culture differs tremendously from group to group. Many cultural practices are discussed in this material are not offered as expert opinions. One of the best ways to handle cultural differences is to acknowledge that clients are the experts of their own lives and culture, no matter where they are from.
Domestic Violence affects people of every race, class, gender, culture and age. The Chinese community has often been depicted as a model minority group in North American society, with deep rooted history in the west. Although this community has contributed vastly to the fabric of western society, little attention has been given to the issue of domestic violence within the Chinese community. Domestic violence is seen as a private matter in Chinese culture. A traditional cultural practice is not to disclose any family wrongs that may bring shame to the family. Chinese victims of domestic violence are often more vulnerable because of stress related to immigration, being a visible ethnic minority, language barriers, as well as numerous systemic related barriers. Moreover, selected cultural value such as hierarchical structures, gender inequality, the belief that family concerns take precedence over individual members and issues of “face” may also contribute to further increasing the risk of domestic abuse.

The Chinese community within Canada represents one of the largest and most established ethnic minority populations. It is also one of the fastest growing ethnic groups in Canada. Chinese account for 20% of Canada’s total immigration intake. Statistics Canada reported that the number of individuals who identified themselves as Chinese was 1,216,600 in 2006, making up 3.9% of the total Canadian population and 24% of the total visible minority population. Official statistics related to domestic violence within the Chinese population in Canada is unavailable; however, reports from two prominent organizations of Vancouver and Toronto revealed that there is a great demand for domestic violence intervention services. The Chinese Family Life Services of Metro Toronto reported that they have seen the number of domestic violence related cases increase over 100% in a ten years period from 1986 to 1996.

Culture should never be used to justify violence but it has the potential for offering insights and solutions to ending domestic violence. Service providers need to be fully aware of service users’ idiosyncrasies, their length of stay in Canada, their level of acculturation, the amount of cultural values being transmitted from and across generations, and the service users self identification as a Chinese. It is the hope that this manual will offer service providers a tool to further assist in supporting Chinese victims who are experiencing violence in their homes.

The Chinese Community Response to Family Violence (CCRFV) is supported by the Calgary Chinese Elderly Citizens’ Association (CCECA). Our partnerships include Alliance to End Violence (AEV), Calgary Chinese Community Service Association (CCCSA), Calgary Chinese Christian Mission Calgary Service Centre (CCMC), Sing Tao Newspapers (Canada 1988) Ltd. and Dr. Daniel Lai, Faculty of Social Work, University of Calgary. Most of the partners are committee members of the Emotional Health Carnival, an annual event which was established in 2002 to promote mental health in the Chinese community. Many victims of family violence came to the event seeking help which gave birth to this initiative formerly known as “Chinese partnership to tackle family violence”.

From August 2007 to November 2007, we conducted five Chinese community members’ focus groups and two mainstream service provider and Chinese community stakeholders focus groups.

The following are some of the findings identified by the focus groups:

- Victims do not want to expose their family issues to outsiders.
- Victims are reluctant to seek help due to their lack of confidence in the ability of the current service system to meet their needs.
- New immigrants are particularly vulnerable due to the fact that they have none or limited information and knowledge about family violence issues, are unaware of support services in Canada such as shelters and counselling services, are distrustful of the justice system, and do not know their rights and are uninformed as to what kind of legal protection is available.
- Many organizational and systemic barriers hinder victims’ help seeking.

Following the focus groups findings, the partnership organized an Action Forum in March 2008. Over 60 participants including mainstream service providers, police, shelter, immigrant-serving agencies, Chinese organizations, Chinese faith communities, media, and funders attended the said forum. To follow through with the focus groups findings, recommendations and feedback, funding was secured from the Prairieaction Foundation. The goal was to conduct research examining Chinese women’s pathways to seeking help and the effect of culture on family violence in the Chinese community. In addition to this, in 2009, the partnership received a Victim of Crime funding grant from the office of the Alberta Solicitor General & Public Security.
• To develop an infrastructure for Chinese Community service providers to enable them to assist domestic violence victims.

• To create awareness in the Chinese community on domestic violence and to strengthen families.

• To build neighbourhood networks with faith groups, community organizations and the Chinese community at-large.

• To increase the capacity of mainstream organizations to deliver more culturally sensitive services to the Chinese community.

• To understand the pathway of women victims who experienced family violence in the Chinese community by obtaining qualitative interview data.

It is envisioned that the project will continue to expand and provide direct support to victims. The ultimate goal is to ensure that future services, family violence prevention programs and policies, community education, and intervention is culturally sensitive to the unique characteristics and needs of the Chinese community.

**Purpose of this publication**

The purpose of this publication is to help service providers look beyond the presenting concern and see the background and culture of the service users. Culture is a common framework shared universally among a particular group as well as across groups. Therefore, it has a profound effect on guiding people’s beliefs and values and shaping their attitude and thinking that justifies behaviour and action.

Regardless of which culture or society, family violence is often a hidden and taboo subject. As service providers, we need to thoroughly understand the service users and their situation so that appropriate services can be provided. In order to offer the type of service that is germane and appropriate, providers are required to understand the cultural framework the service users’ have, as well as their values and cultural practices. Understanding the service users’ culture through their cultural lens helps service providers see how the problem is framed and how the issue is defined, therefore enabling the providers to understand the service users at a deeper level and from different perspectives. An appropriate service plan can then be designed.

This publication is an attempt to promote the best practice of cultural consideration in the work/helping process. This is also our first document in the project and as we learn more from our research and clinical practice, we will enrich our document in the years to come.
The first step for service providers to be more culturally competent while working with the Chinese community is to take into account the culture and the background of the service users. Effective communication is essential in enabling the service provider to understand the users’ issue and situation. Culturally sensitive providers explore the person’s perceptual framework and are open to cultural differences. As well, service providers need to be skilled at exploring and clarifying issues and concerns rather than making judgemental assumptions. Being culturally considerate is a basic skill for effective cultural intervention. In order to claim cultural competency, we need to constantly examine and challenge our own personal beliefs, values, attitudes, biases and assumptions about different individuals and communities. Even service users from the same cultural groups may see and do things differently. When working with ethnic groups like the Chinese community, providers should also understand how immigration, acculturation, and systemic barriers may further jeopardize vulnerable groups. Culturally competent providers should also be aware of their privileged and authoritative position which may invite distrust, fear and disengagement during the course of intervention.

Layout of this publication

In this publication, readers will find scenarios related to family violence and abuse in the Chinese community that illustrate the cultural considerations that competent providers should contemplate in the helping/work process. The narratives are fabricated and the names are fictitious and are used solely for illustration purposes.

Scenarios and cultural focus discussion

Scenarios are used as a basis to think about working with diverse groups. The discussions generated from the scenarios focus on the impact of culture. The recommended responses in the interventions are merely part of culturally relevant considerations and do not suggest that any single approach is correct in dealing with any particular circumstance.
“Domestic Violence is defined as the attempt, act or intent of someone within a relationship, where the relationship is characterized by intimacy, dependency or trust, to intimidate either by threat or by the use of physical force on another person or property. The purpose of the abuse is to control and/or exploit through neglect, intimidation, inducement of fear or by inflicting pain. Abusive behaviour can take many forms including: verbal, physical, sexual, psychological, emotional, spiritual, economic and the violation of rights. All forms of abusive behaviour are ways in which one human being is trying to have control and/or exploit or have power over another.”

Types of abuse:

- **Physical Abuse** – legally known as assault, it includes a wide range of violent and aggressive behaviours. Possible signs of physical abuse are hitting, slapping, punching, kicking, shoving, pushing, dragging and hair pulling, spitting, biting, choking, shaking, confining, restraining, and burning with fire or chemicals, such as acid. It also includes throwing objects or using a weapon. Laws in Canada do not permit physical abuse to take place and depending on how someone is hurt, the assailant can be charged with physical abuse offences ranging from simple assault, assault with a weapon, aggravated assault, unlawfully causing bodily harm to attempted murder or manslaughter, or murder.

- **Emotional, Verbal and Psychological Abuse** – any kind of abuse that affects the mind rather than the body. These are attempts to isolate, threaten or intimidate another person and like other forms of violence in relationships, it is based on power and control. It can systematically wear away a person’s self-confidence, and his or her sense of self-worth and trust in their perceptions. Examples of emotional and verbal abuse include: yelling, criticizing, constantly correcting the person; calling a person names like stupid, slut, or pig; blaming a person for everything; playing mind games or manipulating a person, ordering a person around, keeping a person from spending time with friends and family, threatening to hurt a person, embarrassing a person in public or in front of family and friends, criminally harassing or stalking such as repeatedly following, repeatedly telephoning someone who does not wish to be called, staking out their residence or work place, harming a person’s personal possessions or pets; refusing to be intimate with them as a punishment. Very often emotional and verbal abuse is a sign that physical abuse will follow.

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2. www.victiminfo.ca
• **Sexual Abuse/Assault** – any form of sexual activity without a person’s consent. It includes any kissing, fondling, touching, oral/anal sex or sexual intercourse without consent, not stopping sexual contact when asked to, forcing someone to engage in sexual intercourse or any other sexual act.\(^1\) Other forms of sexual abuse include being forced to have sex with others, being forced to watch the performance of others, or being criticized for sexual performance.\(^2\) In Canada, legislation was changed in 1983 to make it a crime for a man to sexually assault his wife. Prior to these changes, a wife was considered as the sexual property of her husband.\(^3\) If a husband forces his wife or uses threats to make her take part in sexual activity, he can be charged with sexual assault.

• **Financial Abuse** – forcing a person to be financially dependent by cutting off their access and control of money and financial information. Examples are: stealing from or defrauding someone; withholding money to buy food or medical treatment; preventing a person from working or controlling their choice of occupation; denying access to financial information such as how much money is coming in, how much is owed; controlling bank accounts; taking away cheque books or credit cards; forcing someone to work to support oneself; forcing the person to have all expenditures and purchases approved by oneself; refusing to account for the spending of family money;\(^4\) the misuse of funds or property, forced sale of home possessions, forced change of will; or abuse of trusteeship or power of attorney.\(^5\)

• **Religious/Spiritual Abuse** – restricting or preventing a person from engaging in spiritual practices, customs, or traditions, using a person’s religious or spiritual beliefs to exploit them; attacking a person’s spiritual beliefs; not allowing the person to attend church, synagogue, or temple of his or her choice.

• **Neglect** – a form of abuse directed at a person who is dependent upon others for personal care, such as children, persons with disabilities/illnesses and seniors. Neglect can be physical, emotional, or financial. For example, a neglectful caregiver stops paying the bills or providing food, shelter, medication, and medical attention, and not assisting with matters of hygiene or other basic daily needs. Abandoning the person is another form of neglect.\(^6\)

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1. www.aasac.ca/txt-fact-sexual-assault-abuse.htm The Alberta Association of Sexual Assault Centres
Abuse is a Crime

Many types of abuse or neglect are crimes under the Criminal Code of Canada. The most common charges related to domestic abuse are assault and sexual assault. Others include theft (including theft by a person who has been given the power of attorney); fraud; criminal intimidation and harassment; failing to provide a dependent person with the necessities of life; and manslaughter or murder.¹

Definition Of Domestic Relationship

The Calgary Police Service (CPS) definition of domestic relationship is probably the most inclusive in North America. The following are the relationships considered to constitute a domestic relationship under CPS policy.²

Culprit-to-Victim Relationships Constituting Domestic Conflicts

- Boyfriend or girlfriend……………………..not co-habiting
- Brother or sister…………………………..biological, step or adopted
- Co-habiting partner…………………………same or opposite sex
- Common-law husband or wife
- Ex-boyfriend or girlfriend………………….never co-habited
- Ex-co-habiting partner……………………..same or opposite sex
- Ex-common-law husband or wife
- Ex-husband or wife
- Father or mother……………………………biological, step or adopted
- Foster parent………………………………..guardian
- Foster son or daughter……………………..guardian
- Foster brother or sister
- Grandmother or grandfather
- Husband or wife
- Son or daughter
- Uncle or aunt
- Extended family……………………………..nephew/niece, father-/mother-in-law
  \[\text{Great grandparents, etc.}\]

². Source from Sergeant John Guigon, Supervisor-Major Crimes Section, Domestic Conflict Unit, Calgary Police Service.
Section II:

Cultural Considerations and Suggestions

- Chinese Community
- Questions to Ponder in your interactions with Chinese family violence clients
- Case scenarios
  - Spousal Abuse
  - Elder Abuse
  - Child Abuse

Please Note:

Understand service users as individuals within the cultural context. Do not assume that all people from the same culture experience the same reality.
Cultural Considerations & Suggestions

Demographics & Background

Calgary’s Chinese community is the fourth-largest Chinese community in Canada. According to Statistics Canada, 2006 report, 75,410 ethnic Chinese resided in Calgary and 120,270 Chinese in Alberta. 1 It is estimated that one third of the Chinese community were Canadian born and the rest were immigrants with almost half arriving after 1991. 2 The Chinese are the largest visible minority group in Calgary and Alberta.

The Chinese are a very diverse ethnic group within which there are many sub ethnic groups. In China alone, there are 56 ethnic groups. This excludes Chinese from Taiwan, Hong Kong and those in America, South East Asia and other parts of the world. Chinese in Calgary are mainly from Mainland China, Hong Kong, Taiwan and South East Asia such as Malaysia, Singapore and Vietnam etc. Each sub group has their own dialect, cultural norms and values and the level of influence from Chinese traditional culture differs tremendously from group to group.

Chinese Written Language (Simplified & Traditional Chinese)

The long standing written language in the Chinese history has been traditional Chinese. In the 20th century, written Chinese was divided into two forms, called Simplified Chinese and Traditional Chinese. Simplified Chinese was developed in the People’s Republic of China to make Chinese easier to write and to memorize. Simplified Chinese is standard in the People’s Republic of China, Singapore and Malaysia. Traditional Chinese is retained in Hong Kong, Taiwan, Macau and in overseas Chinese communities. 3

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Issues Identified in Consultation with community members, stakeholders, community and mainstream service providers

The following issues were identified as having an impact on family violence.

1. Language barriers

2. Losing face - disclosure entails losing face and bringing shame to family

3. Concerns over confidentiality

4. Worries about consequences of reporting – will the victim or abuser be deported or arrested?

5. Lack of family violence information and resources in Chinese

6. Organizational and systemic barriers that hinder access and victims’ help seeking.
### Cultural Considerations & Suggestions

**Questions to Ponder in Your Interaction With Chinese Family Violence Service Users:**

*These questions are just guidelines, and service providers are welcome to set their own questions.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Considerations</th>
<th>Sample Questions</th>
<th>Rationale</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Have you addressed your service users’ linguistic and cultural needs?</td>
<td>I understand that you speak Chinese. Would you please tell me if you speak Cantonese, Mandarin, or other Chinese dialects such as Fukien? or Toishan?</td>
<td>Language is clearly a formidable barrier to help-seeking behaviours of immigrants, especially new immigrants. <strong>Given the number of dialects, it is important to ensure that the interpreter speaks the same dialect as the service users.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Before you came to Canada, were you living in China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Vietnam, or other parts of the world?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have you addressed your service users’ cultural concerns about the issue of</td>
<td>Tell me how you feel about disclosing your family conflicts to me?</td>
<td>From the perspective of Confucianism, “Chinese society is neither individual-based nor society-based, it’s relation-based”, and man is a “relational being”. The traditional Chinese self is defined in a relational context of significant others and there is limited individual self. To maintain a collective existence, family harmony, loyalty, interdependence, filial piety, chastity, integrity, dignity and endurance are highly valued. Shaming the family name or losing face is unacceptable.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Shame</td>
<td>How difficult is it for you to talk about your family issues?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Guilt</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>- Confidentiality</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>- Protecting the Family name and face</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>- Difficulty in exposing Family weakness to outsiders</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you understand your service users’ predicaments and situations?</td>
<td>Who in the family understands your hardship when you are trying to keep the family together?</td>
<td>Presenting the issue may be the “tip of the iceberg” in terms of the personal narrative. Facilitating clients to retell their stories can be an empowering and respectful experience for them.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Cultural Considerations & Suggestions
## Cultural Considerations & Suggestions

### Rationale
Immigrants and refugee populations are especially vulnerable to family violence because of: limited language skills, social and economic isolation, acculturative stress, unfamiliarity with the legal system and lack of knowledge regarding their rights and availability of services.

Please refer to Appendix C for the power and control wheel specific to immigrant women.

In-law conflict is one of the risk indicators for intimate partner violence in the Chinese community. Somatisation of psychological or interpersonal problems is very common among Chinese people. Chinese cultural values place a heavy emphasis on organic causation of psychological problems and inhibitions of emotions.

Accessing resources and information such as immigration law and legal procedures can help users become less fearful so they can make informed decisions and increase their options.

Many family violence victims are very isolated and bridging them to their community resources can help address their isolation and provide social support.

### Considerations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Considerations</th>
<th>Sample Questions</th>
<th>Rationale</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In working with immigrants:</td>
<td>Can you tell me what kind of stress you are experiencing in your newly adopted country?</td>
<td>Immigrants and refugee populations are especially vulnerable to family violence because of: limited language skills, social and economic isolation, acculturative stress, unfamiliarity with the legal system and lack of knowledge regarding their rights and availability of services.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are you familiar with the acculturation process?</td>
<td>How do you feel about relying on your wife’s income?</td>
<td>Please refer to Appendix C for the power and control wheel specific to immigrant women.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you understand the stressors associated with drastic role changes?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are you familiar with the power and control wheel specific to immigrant women?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In making assessments, have you enquired into:</td>
<td>Would you mind helping me understand your in-law relationship?</td>
<td>In-law conflict is one of the risk indicators for intimate partner violence in the Chinese community. Somatisation of psychological or interpersonal problems is very common among Chinese people. Chinese cultural values place a heavy emphasis on organic causation of psychological problems and inhibitions of emotions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- In-law conflicts?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Somatic problems and complaints such as insomnia, headaches and gastrointestinal problems that service users have difficulty in identifying causations.</td>
<td>Do you also consult an herbalist? How helpful do you find him/her?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have you provided relevant information so that your service users are more knowledgeable and resourceful in managing their situations?</td>
<td>Would this legal information be useful?</td>
<td>Accessing resources and information such as immigration law and legal procedures can help users become less fearful so they can make informed decisions and increase their options.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have you linked service users to community resources?</td>
<td>Would you like to get any resources and support from your community?</td>
<td>Many family violence victims are very isolated and bridging them to their community resources can help address their isolation and provide social support.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Karen: What happened to your eyes? He hit you again?

Cindy: Last night he was very angry because I was screaming hysterically at him for his extramarital affairs and I heard from his sister that the other woman recently gave birth to a boy. He lost his temper again and he punched and kicked me even though I am carrying his third child. I know he and his mom didn’t like the fact that I bore 2 daughters for him and that I have to quit my job due to my pregnancy. My mother-in-law saw what happened but she blamed me for stirring up trouble and making him lose it. I am so stupid, it is my fault. I should not have made a scene, the apartment superintendent called the police and how can he face the neighbours now?

Karen: But this is not his first time, so what are you going to do?

Cindy: I don’t know. What can I do? I will bear with it. He is sponsoring my parents to come here and I have my family to think of. My siblings are still young; they can have a good life here. He is the father of my children, I can’t be selfish, and I can’t break up the family. He is a good bread winner, he provides for the family and my mom said that I am much better off than many women. We have a house and a car and he is earning Canadian dollars!

Karen: Did you tell the police? What did you say?

Cindy: The police talked to him first and you know me, I don’t speak any English. The police later asked me through an interpreter but I did not dare to say anything. He often threatens to drop my parent’s sponsorship if I say anything to anyone. You will not tell, right?

Karen: I understand it is very difficult for you. I wish I can help you but as you know my husband does not like me to get involved. He does not want me to meddle into other people’s private affairs.
Cultural Considerations & Suggestions

The following depicts and explains some embedded traditional values and beliefs that may have an impact on Chinese relational interactions and cultural dynamics.

1. In traditional Chinese society, the man is the head of the family. Men have expectations of compliance, respect and deference from their spouse. Studies on face orientation reported that the stronger the face orientation, the greater the gender role stress and the greater likelihood that male abusers will use violence against female partners.¹ There is a tendency for Chinese abusers to lose their temper in face-losing situations or when they feel they are being challenged or shamed.²

Male abusers can be assisted to develop a better understanding of their needs for “face”. Losing face could result in feelings of anger and shame. In this scenario, when Cindy’s husband was challenged by her regarding his extramarital affairs and his illegitimate son, he reacted aggressively with anger. Chinese male abusers can be assisted to identify situations and events that trigger them and may lead to a loss of face. Help them make conscious choices for non-violent solutions. For example an abuser may react aggressively if his wife complains about her mother-in-law in public. Help the abuser learn to remind his wife to discuss her complaints in private with him or walk away from the situation. Abusers can also be engaged by understanding their face needs and their stressors due to social changes. Male immigrants often experience underemployment or unemployment and role reversal in their newly adopted country. It is important to understand their perception that they are not competent enough and their fear of losing status in their families.

2. Chinese women’s role and obligations – The Three Obediences
   - Traditionally these are widely accepted codes of behaviours for morally good women. Before marriage, a woman follows and obeys her father; after marriage, she follows and obeys her husband; after the death of her husband, she follows and obeys her son.
   - The “Three obedience’s” codes reinforce cultural ideas of unquestionable submission of women to men.
   - Quite often when a traditional Chinese woman finds no good reason to submit, she is still expected to “endure and persevere” and to be a good wife. There is a common saying “repeated endurance produces precious gold”.

These values make it extremely difficult for the victims to disclose battering problems. In general, Chinese women have learned to be fairly accommodating and possess a high level of interpersonal tolerance. Service providers can be supportive and empathic in understanding their ambivalence in seeking help.

Instead of having a “survivor mentality” (I am the victim, it is not my fault and I deserved to be helped), a traditional Chinese woman may develop an “instigator mentality” (I bring shame to the family, I cause the family breakdown). Her report of the incident means exposing her family weakness to outsiders, shaming the family name, violating the virtues of perseverance and endurance, and causing divorce or separation to the family.¹

One culturally relevant way to build rapport is to acknowledge the victims feelings of guilt, shame and loss of face in seeking help. The concept of “loss of face” in Chinese victims may imply that the victim is not the only individual burdened with the shame, but rather, it is the entire family and clan.

In this case scenario, Cindy opted to bear with it and even perceived that it was her fault i.e. “stirring up trouble”. Many Chinese victims are like Cindy, who blame themselves for creating trouble. This dilemma needs to be addressed and recognized, and potential shame and guilt normalized in their cultural context. For example, “It is very common for Chinese women to feel shameful and guilty when disclosing family violence. It is OK to feel this way.”

It is not uncommon for victims to be seen as troublemakers once the situation is publicly known to police and community. The community (relatives, friends, etc.) may direct their sympathy and support to the abuser. Victims may be ostracized, lose family support and community respect and become totally cut off from their connection to their culture. Referring victims to community resources and assisting them to re-establish and rebuild community ties to ward off isolation is necessary.

Victims’ help seeking behaviours can be reframed as positive actions taken to bring “benefits to the whole family, encouraging the abusers to seek help, and protecting the children from further abuse”. These reframes are more congruent with the family oriented cultural values.

Please Note:

Sexual abuse is very difficult to unveil. In general, Chinese women are not comfortable talking about sex. Furthermore, women are often confused about what sexual abuse refers to in a marital relationship and are unclear to what extent sex in a husband-wife relationship would be classified as sexual abuse. It is worth noting, that we do need to explore and learn more about sexual abuse in the Chinese community.

3. Traditionally sons are valued over daughters as sons carry the family last name and provide social security for their elderly parents. There is a Chinese saying “Having sons are a way to ensure old age security”. On the other hand, traditionally daughters are perceived as “pour out water” and once they are married, they are considered “outsiders” even in their family of origin.

4. Due to the patriarchal nature of Chinese families, violence against wives may be instigated by both male and female relatives on the male side. It is not uncommon for conflicts between the mother-in-law and the wife to lead to various forms of family violence.

   • In a traditional Chinese family, mother in-laws may derive power from their son and induce violent acts against their daughter in-law. Screening for family violence in Chinese families should include assessing for in-law conflicts. Mothers may collude with sons in the abusive relationship.

   • Beware of in-law abuse that includes isolation, social and economic control and domestic servitude.

5. As indicated in the case scenario, Cindy did not disclose anything even though the police invited a cultural interpreter to assist. Before using an interpreter, it is best to ask service users if they want you to find one for them. Confidentiality is extremely important and some clients may not feel comfortable using an interpreter provided by you as they may fear that the interpreter may know their spouse or family and friends. Please refer to Appendix D, guideline for working with an interpreter.

6. Family matters are generally regarded as private matters and the cultural norm is “not to meddle into other people’s business”. This makes it extremely difficult for some victims to get help even when they are courageous enough to disclose to their friends or relatives, as in the case scenario. Their friends or relatives may not want to get involved.


Case 2- Elder Abuse

Scenario - Mrs. Wong visits Mrs. Chan, a widowed elderly lady who resides with her son & his family.

Wong: Mrs. Chan, how are you feeling today? Yesterday, I waited for you at the dim sum restaurant but you did not show up. I called your home and your daughter in law said that you were not feeling well. Are you OK?

Chan: I am fine. Yesterday, my daughter-in-law wanted me to babysit my grandson as she had to go out to play mah-jong (a very common Chinese “checkers” game) with her friends. She did not allow me to go out for lunch with you and she locked me in the house. Today, they went to Disneyland for vacation and will not be back until next Sunday and now I am all alone by myself in this big house.

Wong: Does she always do that to you? Lock you in the house?

Chan: She wants me to stay home to help with the household chores, so I cook, I clean, I do the laundry and I babysit for her. I know I am old and sometimes slow, it seems like she is very displeased with me these days.

Wong: Does your son know that?

Chan: No, I don’t want to break up his family. I raised my son well. He is a very respectable doctor and I am very proud of him. All my relatives and friends envy me for having such a son. So when they asked me to sell my house in China and come to Canada to live with them I was so happy then. But now things have changed. She does not even let my grandchildren talk to me. She does not want me here, because every time she sees me she yells at me and sends me back down to my room in the basement. At night, she locks the basement door so that I can not come up. I do not want to tell anyone because people will look down upon me. I do not want my son to know how bad she treats me. Maybe this is my fate... As a woman at this age, I thought that I could totally rely on my high achieving son and enjoy peaceful aging years.
Cultural Considerations and Suggestions

1. Elder abuse and neglect do exist in contemporary Chinese societies despite the cultural values of promoting respect and care towards elders and the emphasis on the traditional Confucian principles of filial piety. Filial piety includes showing respect and affection, fulfilling one’s responsibility, harmonizing the family, and making payments and sacrifices for the benefit of the family (Sung, 1998). Recent research on abuse and neglect experienced by aging Chinese in Canada reported that 4.5% of the participants have experienced at least one incident of maltreatment or neglect within the past year. Forms of abuse reported included being yelled at, scolded, ridiculed, treated rudely all the time, and being verbally threatened.

• As much as the general belief that the Chinese elderly are mostly respected and cared for by their families, like any community incidents of elderly abuse do occur.

• Assess for potential signs of abuse and neglect.

2. As depicted in the case scenario, Mrs. Chan does not want to tell anyone about the abuse, and especially her son. Many victims are like Mrs. Chan and feel very ashamed about revealing and acknowledging their victimization. It is extremely difficult for them to admit to others that their family members e.g. adult children, are not fulfilling their filial obligation.

• Acknowledge and normalize the feelings of shame, guilt and loss of face in disclosure.

• Be empathic and supportive in understanding their ambivalence and assist them to work through their ambivalence and shame.

• Let them know that it is not their fault that their children do not adhere to the principles of filial piety and they are not responsible for the abuse or neglect.

3. Changes in in-law relationship -
Due to the high dependency on family members in their newly adopted country, Chinese elders may no longer enjoy the presumed authority they have over the daughter-in-law. Research on abuse and neglect experienced by aging Chinese in Canada indicates that those who are less educated, in poor health and who adhere more to strong traditional Chinese values are much more vulnerable to abuse and neglect.¹

Sponsorship for citizenship also put elders at a disadvantaged position and in many cases they feel inferior and believe they have to provide “free labour” to their sponsors. Some may even be at risk of verbal and financial abuse. Many elders are not aware of their legal rights and are fearful that they will be deported or that their sponsors will have to go to jail once they disclosed the abuse.

- For sponsored elders, address their fear of deportation and the consequences of their disclosure.
- Educate them on their legal rights and link them to community resources and available services.

4. A mother’s worth depends totally on her son. There is a Chinese saying that “a mother’s worth is dependent on her son”. Children are not only seen as an extension of self but moreover the mother’s entire worth and meaning in life is based on her son’s achievement. If the son is a good achiever and does well in life and work, his success reflects on her achievement as a good mother.

5. A philosophical view of “destiny”- As explained by Mrs. Chan, many Chinese hold a view of “destiny” towards life. Victims may hold the beliefs that they are “destined” to a life with the abuser, and they may rationalize it as a punishment of their past karma or their family’s karma. Therefore, suffering and sorrow are accepted.

- Make good use of “destiny” to assist clients to reframe and turn the situation around. e.g. Clients’ abusive relationship may be destined to end.

Case 3 - Child Abuse

Scenario - Counsellor, Mr. Chan and Mrs. Chan, middle aged couple with 2 children, a son and a daughter, Eric, 12 years old and Melissa 8 years old. Mr. Chan is a restaurant worker and Mrs. Chan is a homemaker.

Presenting problem: Parents were referred by child welfare to see a counsellor re: child abuse.

Counsellor: Can you tell me what brings you here?

Chan: I don’t know, I am ordered to be here. They took my children away and said I hit my son. I just discipline my child in my own home; they have no business doing this. I am their father and I can do anything to my family members in my own home.

Counsellor: It appears that you felt wronged. Can you tell me what actually happened?

Chan: I forgot exactly when that happened. It was a Sunday evening, a couple of weeks ago. I just got off work and when I arrived home, I heard his mom asking my son Eric to take the garbage out. Eric was playing a video game and he did not even answer his mom. His mom kept calling him and he was annoyed and shouted back at her. He was so disrespectful, I told him off and he was so mad and he even used bad language, he said “F off”. When I heard that, I couldn’t stand it anymore, how could he say such things to his father! He made me so angry and I slapped him on his mouth only a couple of times. I just wanted to punish him for saying the bad words.

Counsellor: Do you find you have to use physical punishment to get your children to behave?

Chan: I hit him to punish his wrong doings, it’s nothing wrong. My parents did the same thing to me. I want him to learn to behave and be good. I love him and that is why I hit him. If I don’t love him I would not have hit him. I work so hard, I work 7 days a week, I don’t even take a day off. I just work, work and work to provide for my family so that they can have a better living. Now, see what I get… seeing you, I lost half a day’s pay. I have to pay you and parking and gas too. It is so expensive here. Who will provide for my family? Will the government do it?
Cultural Considerations and Suggestions

1. In the case scenario, Mr. Chan feels justified that as a father he can do anything to his family members in his own home because family matters are perceived as private matters. Whatever happens in the family is kept in the family. Based on a patriarchal family structure, Chinese men are legitimate heirs to continue their family lineage and as the head of the household, they are endorsed with a strong sense of importance and entitlement.

2. There is a Chinese saying that “Family shame should be kept within the confines of the family” and the norm is not to disclose any family matters that may prove embarrassing. Disclosure is seen not only as a disloyal act but also as shaming the family name and losing face.

3. Father’s role – Traditional Chinese fathers tend to assume an instrumental and functional role. Like Mr. Chan, he works very hard to provide for his family. Some Chinese fathers even work two jobs 7 days a week. Chinese parents can be very self-sacrificing. Sometimes they give up so much for their children that in return they expect absolute obedience from them. Traditional fathers may treat their children and especially their sons, better than their wife.¹

   • Recognize and acknowledge the abusers’ hard work and his/her responsibility and love for their family.

   • Maintain an open attitude of listening and support to engage abusers in sharing their difficulties and problems.

   • Understand their face needs and the stress they experience as a new immigrant or from being unemployed or under employed.

   • Adopt an assertive and mildly confrontational approach. It may be a culturally sensitive way to establish a relationship with Chinese male abusers. It is also a way to show your respect and to acknowledge his need for “face”.

   • Educate and encourage the abusers to take responsibility and be accountable for their violent behaviours.

4. The influence of Confucianism - Confucius, a Chinese philosopher who lived from 551 B.C. to 479 B.C., had a significant influence on Chinese life. Confucius stressed family values and filial piety. His theory on “Wu Lun”, the “Five Cardinal Human Relationships” has had a great impact on Chinese interpersonal relations. Confucius stressed the importance of social order and harmonious human relationships. The Five Relationships are: (1) ruler - subject, (2) father - son, (3) elder brother - younger brother, (4) husband - wife and (5) older friends - younger friends. These relationships are governed by benevolence and care for one side (ruler, father, elder brother, husband and older friend) and reciprocal obligations of respect and obedience, for the other side (subject, son, younger brother, wife, and younger friend).

5. The influence of Chinese traditional values in parenting and child rearing practices - Research findings in Hong Kong indicate that Chinese parents who adopt a traditional moral and ethical stance in their parenting practice expect higher compliance from their children. They are more likely to use negative reinforcement e.g. shaming their child, to stop or change their undesirable behaviours. Their expectations are higher than the age appropriate level of the child and a lot of emphasis is placed on obedience, respect for authority, work, tradition and the preservation of order.

The same research findings indicate that harsh discipline is used to maintain and enforce children’s obedience and parental authority.

- Assist abusers to learn about the limitations of the use of corporal punishment in parenting.
- Assist them to develop and maintain positive parenting skills.

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Section III:

Community Resources

- Community and Organizational Contact Information
- Online Resources
Chinese Community Response to Family Violence Program & Services

Phone: (403) 991 3255
Email: hearme@telus.net

Victim Support Services:

Bilingual, bi-cultural advocates provide:

1. Case Management of women, children and families of victims of family violence
   - Coordinate intake, assessment of families
   - Develop individualized safety plan and goal oriented action plans
   - Emotional support and supportive counselling
   - Court support and court preparation
   - Educate victims of their rights
   - Provide advocacy to external agencies including the police, court, legal aid, women’s shelter, social services in regards to case

2. Helpline/Crisis Management
   - Respond to crisis calls of the helpline
   - Respond to crisis situations/emergencies
   - Consultation and referrals

3. Community outreach
   - Support at risk community members
   - Provide education, training to staff, volunteers and community members on family violence
   - Disseminate family violence materials to educate community at large
   - Provide training to mainstream service providers on culturally sensitive service
Calgary Chinese Elderly Citizens' Association (CCECA)

111 Riverfront Avenue, SW, Calgary, Alberta T2P 4Y8
Phone: 403 269 6122
Fax: 403 269 1951
Email: cceca@cceca.ca
Website: www.cceca.ca

First language (Cantonese and Mandarin) outreach services for Chinese older adults and their family members:

- Provision of information and benefit application to meet basic financial needs
- Assessment and case management
- Elder abuse intervention and support
- Escort and interpretation
- Supportive counselling
- Community outreach and weekly visit to isolated seniors in care centres, lodges and homes
- Free home safety assessment for low income senior home owners
- Weekly support groups
- Chopsticks on wheels delivers hot Chinese meals to frail seniors
- Adult Day support program for frail seniors and their caregivers
- Health services – weekly wellness centre, mobile laboratory, foot care, annual flu clinic and escort mammogram service, chronic disease management classes, exercise and self management program.
- ESL classes and social/recreational programs
Calgary Chinese Community Service Association (CCCSA)
#1, 128-2nd Ave, SW,
Calgary, Alberta, T2P 0B9
Phone: 403-265-8446
Fax: 403-233-0070
Email: Cccsa@cccsa.ca
Website: www.cccsa.ca

Services:

• Integration and Civic Engagement
  - Information and referral
  - Client Advocate
  - Family Life Education
  - After School Homework Club
  - Youth in Action – leadership training
  - Legal Clinic
  - Workers’ Clinic
  - New Immigrant Circle
  - Stepping Stones- English literacy class
  - Conversation club
  - Volunteer interpretation

• Community Development
  - Chinatown Safety Project is a community engagement initiative to engage community members in crime prevention. Activities such as: Safety Council meeting, safety column in newspaper, movie nights, ambassador program, mural projects, Chinatown Cleaning Day

• Health project
  - Breast health and cancer prevention
  - Broad base health project
Chinese Christian Mission of Canada, Calgary Service Centre (CCM)

#209, 108 – 3rd Ave. S.W.
Calgary, Alberta T2P 0E7
Phone: 403 233-8763
Fax: 403 262-8763
Email: csc@ccmcanada.org
Website: www.ccmcanada.org

Canada Calgary Service Centre is a non-profit service organization for Chinese immigrants in Calgary. Its aim is to demonstrate the love of Christ through assistance to the local churches providing Chinese immigrants with services such as:

- Information and referrals
- New Immigrant Seminars/Information and Orientation for New Immigrants
- Citizenship Classes
- English Club
- Mandarin Friendship Club
- “Children with Special Needs” Resource Centre
- Self Help Care Group for Parents with Special Needs Children
- Cancer Prevention and Care Fellowship
- Beyond Grieving – specifically set up for widowed women
- Depression Support Group
- Seniors Teahouse
- Light Aerobics
- Cooking Classes
- Parenting Classes
- Preschool Classes
- Summer Classes
- Computer Classes

Manna Counselling and Education Centre

George Chiu, Registered Psychologist

340, 39 St, S.E.
Calgary, Alberta T2G-1X6
(403) 287-3621
1. **Alliance to End Violence**
   www.endviolence.ca
   Resources Section: Help Card & Safety Plan in Traditional Chinese

2. **Shelternet**
   www.shelternet.ca
   Multi-languages website: provide information and resources on shelter and domestic violence for women, teens, families in Canada.
   Available in Simplified Chinese

3. **Government of Alberta, Child & Youth Services**
   Materials and Resources
   www.child.alberta.ca/home/832.cfm
   Translated materials available
Appendices & References

Appendix A

*Source with permission from “A Cultural Competence Guide for Primary Health Care Professionals in Nova Scotia” Diversity and Social Inclusion Initiative, Nova Scotia 2005*

EIGHT STEPS TO CULTURAL COMPETENCE FOR PRIMARY HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONALS

1. Examine your values, behaviours, beliefs and assumptions.

2. Recognize racism and the institutions or behaviours that breed racism.

3. Engage in activities that help you to reframe your thinking, allowing you to hear and understand other world views and perspectives.

4. Familiarize yourself with core cultural elements of the communities you serve, including: Physical and biological variations, concepts of time, space and physical contact, styles and patterns of communication, physical and social expectations, social structures and gender roles.

5. Engage clients and patients to share how their reality is similar to, or different from, what you have learned about their core cultural elements. Unique experiences and histories will result in differences in behaviours, values and needs.

6. Learn how different cultures define, name and understand disease and treatment. Engage your clients to share with you how they define, name and understand their ailments.

7. Develop a relationship of trust with clients and co-workers by interacting with openness, understanding, and a willingness to hear different perceptions.

8. Create a welcoming environment that reflects the diverse communities you serve.
### Appendix B

**LIAASE: A General Cultural Competence Tool**  
*Adapted from Ontario Healthy Communities coalition October 2004*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learn</th>
<th>Avoid Polarization</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Read literature from other cultures</td>
<td>- Solicit other options or points of view</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Identify your own biases and stereotypes</td>
<td>- Ask what perspective a person from a different background would have</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Inquire</th>
<th>Avoid Arguing and Defending</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Ask questions to clarify and understand information</td>
<td>- Curb the impulse to defend your point of view</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Dig deeper to find reasons for behaviors or attitudes</td>
<td>- Agree to disagree on differences in values</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Frame inquires as searches for answers, show a willingness to learn</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Do not judge or interpret actions or speech, verify that what you</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>understand is correct</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Speak clearly; avoid slang, colloquial expressions and large,</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>complex words</td>
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#### State your needs and expectations

It is important to set a respectful tone for the interaction. Let people know what you want and what you consider unacceptable behavior. In this way assumptions, conflict, and/or resentment can be avoided.
Appendix C

Power and Control Wheel Specific to Immigrant Women

Forms of Domestic Violence that Women Experience

This version of the Power and Control wheel, adapted with permission from the Domestic Abuse Intervention Project in Duluth, Minnesota, focuses on some of the many ways battered immigrant women can be abused. Adapted by the Family Violence Prevention Fund, www.endabuse.org.

Source from: Family Violence Prevention Fund. www.endabuse.org
Appendix D

The following is a guideline for working with an interpreter.¹

- Prior to the interview, make sure that the clients and interpreter speak the same language/dialect as there are many different Chinese dialects.

- Book extra time for the appointment. Three way communication takes twice as long as a regular appointment.

- Be aware of the three way communication process using two languages. This may evoke a power distribution in which the service providers ally with the interpreter and exclude the service users.

- Arrange for pre-interview and post-interview sessions to brief and debrief the interpreter.

- Do not use family, friends or relatives to assist in the interpretation.

- In the interview, introduce everyone and establish their roles.

- Arrange seating to facilitate communication between you and the service user. Utilize the "triangle model" where the service provider, the service user and the cultural interpreter are seated in an equilateral triangle.²

- Talk to the service user, not the interpreter.

- Maintain eye contact with the service user.

- Use simple and short statements.

- Speak slowly and do not use jargon.

- Do not raise your voice. There is a tendency for some service providers to raise their voice when communicating with clients who cannot speak the language. This is not helpful because service users do not have a “hearing” problem. Service users simply do not understand the language.

- Use the interpreter as a cultural broker to assist in explaining meanings and idioms.

¹. Family and Domestic Violence Training Package, Participants' Kit. Health Department of Western Australia.
References


Family and Domestic Violence Training Package, Participants' Kit. Health Department of Western Australia.


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