Asian/Pacific Islander Communities: An Agenda for Positive Action

The National Council on Crime and Delinquency &

The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation

Symposium

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This report has been prepared by the Asian/Pacific Islander Youth Violence Prevention Center, a collaborative effort between the National Council on Crime and Delinquency and the University of Hawai`i at Manoa. The API Center is a gathering place for researchers and API communities to engage in dialogue about issues relevant to violence prevention in API communities. This collaboration has grown to include fifteen community partner organizations from a variety of disciplines including public health, medicine, sociology, ethnic studies, psychology, women's studies, criminal justice and community-based and grassroots organizations providing direct services to APIs in need. The API Center is funded by the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention. The aims are: I) to mobilize and collaborate with community-based organizations, social service agencies, educational institutions and juvenile justice agencies to develop a comprehensive strategy and community plan to reduce API youth violence; II) to develop and conduct research on prevention of API youth violence using sophisticated methods and state-of-the-art technology, in collaboration with social and human services agencies; III) to disseminate research findings and provide a national resource for prevention research and promising and effective prevention programs on API youths; IV) to train and develop new researchers in the area of violence prevention research; and V) to develop a training curriculum for health professionals on API youth violence prevention. While the report is based on research conducted by numerous agencies and individuals (see references), findings and recommendations solely reflect the views of the API Center.

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INTRODUCTION

Data from the recent 2000 decennial census offer a glimpse of the rich and shifting racial and ethnic tapestry of the United States population. Asians and Pacific Islanders (API), at 10.6 million persons, comprise approximately 3.7% of the nation's total population.[1] In the metropolises of West coast states, Texas and New York, APIs comprise a significant proportion of urban populations. The nation's most populous state, California, is 12% API. As a composite of heterogeneous ethnic and national origin groups, the API population is increasingly a prominent demographic presence with its own unique interests, needs and contributions to the American social landscape.

In June of 2001 the National Council on Crime and Delinquency (NCCD), in cooperation with the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, convened a symposium to assess the current state of research, exchange information and establish a tentative agenda for action regarding the quality of life and unmet needs of the API population in the United States. Scholars, activists, community-based and non-profit organizations, educators, law and policy experts, and foundations were all present for this conversation. Beyond successfully presenting an array of data and substantive insight on a range of API issues, the symposium afforded a timely exchange between primary stakeholders in API advocacy – research and academia, nonprofit, grassroots and community-based organizations (CBOs), government and the philanthropic and funding sector.

The symposium was convened as an effort to establish a framework from which to better address the specific needs and services that are not being adequately provided for API populations. More specifically it served as an initial information gathering session for NCCD's API Youth Violence Prevention Center (API Center). The API Center is a collaborative effort between the University of Hawaii and the NCCD that aims to prevent and reduce youth violence among the API population and to empower communities to create and maintain safe and healthy living environments. The Center is one of five National Comprehensive Academic Centers of Excellence on Youth Violence funded by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) for a five year period.

Over the course of the symposium, a number of salient themes emerged regarding the contours of API life in the United States. Critical areas included combating model minority myths, developing culturally competent models of intervention, documentation and research issues, youth at risk, policy and legislation affecting APIs, language and education, employment, health, community capacity and funding. The following overview stakes out these themes and together comprises a critical agenda on API life in the United States.

I. API Diversity

The Myth of a Model Minority

Popular perceptions of API-Americans often focus on their anomalous status as a population that has overcome its minority social position and achieved a relative degree of financial, educational and social success. This perception holds that APIs represent a "model minority" who have achieved success in a relatively short period of time through their exemplary commitment to family values, thrift, educational achievement, and a strong work ethic (Lee, 1996; Kitano & Sue, 1973). The model minority

> *One direct consequence of the model minority myth is that government funding and social service agencies often overlook APIs...*

stereotype is especially forceful when invoked in the context of discourses about the continued marginality of other minority groups such as African Americans, Native Americans and Latinos. In contrast to the disadvantaged state of these groups, API success is highlighted as an example of the efficacy of American meritocracy wherein social mobility is equally available to all who work hard. The idea of exemplary API success ignores the social and historical forces that have shaped the unique experiences of these various racial groups as well as the varied experiences of APIs. In addition it assumes that all API are equally successful and overlooks the diversity of

ethnicity, educational and vocational attainment, economic status and social integration of this population of Americans. API achievement can then be employed to strengthen ideological critiques of everything from affirmative action and social welfare programs to the disintegration of family values in American culture (Takagi, 1989).

The model minority myth loses much of its explanatory value when the API population is disaggregated by its diverse internal axes of difference – socioeconomic status, type and degree of workforce participation, educational attainment, nature and period of immigration, literacy and language skills, and so on. The model minority myth reduces these differences into the most visible stories of success and advancement in American society, thereby skewing perceptions of API disadvantage. When API differences are accounted for, an entirely different picture

emerges, where, for instance, poverty rates among Southeast Asians are as high as 67% for some ethnic groups (see Table I, p. 4). Sok (2001) points to 1990 Census data

Table I 1990 Poverty Rates by Selected API Ethnicity	
Ethnic Group	**Poverty Rate**
Entire U.S. Population	*10%*
Laotian American	*67%*
Hmong American	*66%*
Cambodian American	*47%*
Vietnamese American	*34%*

Source: President's Advisory Commission on Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, Executive Summary, January 2001

that shows 38% of Asian Americans hold bachelor degrees; however, when these statistics are disaggregated by ethnicity, we see that only 6% of Cambodian, 3% of Hmong, 7% of Lao and 17% of Vietnamese completed college degrees.

One direct consequence of the model minority myth is that government funding and social service agencies often overlook APIs because of the misperception of their collective well-being (U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 1992). The invisibility of API concerns is further enhanced by low participation and representation rates at all levels of political process, regardless of their educational or employment status (Espiritu, 1992). Although there is some indication that API voter turnout increased while non-API electoral participation declined for national elections in the 1990s, the turnout rate for APIs of voting age remains significantly below the national average (U.S. Census Bureau, 1998). API political participation via elected offices lags dramatically far behind every other racial group (see Table II).

The capacity to mobilize collective demands and represent one's interests is positively associated with a group's insertion into institutional and political processes. The significantly low rates of political participation for APIs, from voting behavior to elected governmental service, is just one indicator that undermines the popular perception that APIs have achieved full participation in U.S. society.

CULTURAL COMPETENCE

The diverse, continually shifting demographic composition of the United States challenges commonly

Table II Local Elected Officials Nationally, by Race, Hispanic Origin and Government Type, 1992						
Race	**Total**	**County**	**Municipal**	**Town/ ship**	**School District**	**Special District**
White	*405,905*	*52,705*	*114,880*	*102,676*	*73,894*	*61,750*
Black	*11,542*	*1,715*	*4,566*	*369*	*4,222*	*670*
Hispanic	*5,859*	*906*	*1,701*	*216*	*2,466*	*570*
American Indian, Eskimo, Aleut	*1,800*	*147*	*776*	*86*	*564*	*227*
Asian, Pacific Islander	*514*	*80*	*97*	*16*	*184*	*137*

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1992 Census of Governments, Popularly Elected Officials (GC92(1)-2).

held perceptions of a unitary, overarching American way of life. While certain baseline characteristics define our shared humanity, numerous and meaningful differences also condition the way life is experienced for groups differentially positioned in society. Increasing racial and ethnic diversity and a host of other differences have forced social service, law enforcement, health, and government agencies to become more attuned to cultural difference in their models of service provision. The term that best captures this orientation to engaging social difference is cultural competence.

There is no standard definition of cultural competence. It should be understood as a provisional term that serves as a reference point for a variety of practices, skills and treatment models that represent programmatic efforts at engaging cultural difference as a point of intervention and understanding the ways life practices and outcomes are shaped by these differences. Cultural competence recognizes that programs can become more efficacious by addressing and incorporating social difference into interventions rather than applying standardized models regardless of a population's unique needs. However, culturally competent models of intervention must depart from a permeable understanding of ethnic difference that can incorporate the specific experiences of a community without resorting to a relativism that impedes intercultural exchange. Cultural competence recognizes that populations possess unique social, cultural and historical characteristics that can shape their degree of access to the material and institutional benefits of U.S. society. It is a model of support that also encourages those in need to become active agents

in empowering their own families and communities. When successfully employed, culturally competent orientations to social diversity can contribute to an enriched, democratic civic culture beneficial to all.

Cultural competence was a recurring theme during the NCCD/MacArthur API Symposium. Preliminary research conducted by the NCCD has found that three primary themes characterize cultural competency for supporting API need: 1) an emphasis on the internal ethnic diversity of the API community, 2) the primacy of the family and familial dynamics in assessing API needs and outcomes, 3) sensitivity to and advocacy of ethnic-specific knowledge, experience and cultural practices (Arifuku, 2000). In this way cultural competency is both a general model of intervention and an array of tactics, methods and strategies of specific action.

DOCUMENTING THE API POPULATION

In 1999, the White House commissioned a task force to assess the current state of APIs in the United States. This resulted in the White House Initiative on Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders which was written into Executive Order 13125 and calls for a coordinated effort among all federal agencies to improve the quality of life for APIs in areas where they may be underserved. The government's commitment to API advocacy was renewed by the incoming Bush administration, indicating a bipartisan endorsement for accommodating and better responding to the specific needs of this rapidly growing and diverse population. The agenda offered by the White House initiative highlights some of the key themes that comprise the broader discourse

on APIs — mental health, education, domestic violence, immigration, community capacity, civil rights, aging, substance abuse and cultural competency. Conducting research and increasing data collection on APIs was specifically called for in the Initiative. As a means of identifying areas of need and strengthening claims for support, obtaining accurate data on APIs must be emphasized as a primary agenda item for actors with stakes in API life outcomes.

The accurate documentation of API ethnicity and national origin within federal and state agencies and social service institutions has lagged far behind the influx, spatial mobility and settlement of Asian populations in the U.S.[2] This lag is often attributed to the methodological constraints and financial costs associated with data collection. As a result, data on APIs often accounts for the larger groups with a historical presence in this country such as Chinese or Japanese but collapses more recent arrivals or smaller ethnic populations into a non-specific "Other" category. The removal of national, historical and cultural specificity prohibits researchers and service providers from fully assessing the unique characteristics of a particular community. In light of this, NCCD has begun disaggregating and reclassifying arrest data by API ethnicity to better account for intraracial diversity. A program has been developed to filter API records and match surname with ethnic or national descent.[3]

To better facilitate culturally competent practices and service delivery for API populations with varied needs, federal, state and local institutions must work to refine methods of accounting and record keeping. Accurate documentation of ethnicity and national descent, and in some cases oversampling of API groups among larger populations, is a crucial step in more rigorously capturing the nuances of both intra-API difference and the broader concerns of the API population generally.

II. AN EMERGENT
RISK POPULATION

API YOUTH

According to FBI data (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 1997), API arrests in the U.S. increased 726 percent between 1977 and 1997. Meanwhile the number of African American arrests decreased by 30% in this same period. This increase far exceeds proportional growth of the overall U.S. API population during this same approximate twenty year period which grew from 3.7 million in 1980 to 10.2 million in 2000, a 276% increase. The FBI data are not disaggregated by API ethnicity which would provide a clearer relationship between arrests and offenders background. What is clear is the changing API profile during this period as refugees, victims of war, and other highly dispossessed and undereducated populations, particularly those from Southeast Asia were dispersed abroad in relation to post-1960 geopolitical events. Preliminary data for San Francisco and Alameda counties indicate broad intraethnic variation in terms of delinquency, arrests and ethnic or national origin. Vietnamese youth comprise a highly disproportionate amount of juvenile arrests in both counties (Le, et al., 2001a; Le, et al. 2001b). In California, the percentage of API male juvenile offenders of all those detained in California Youth Authority facilities has increased from under 4% to 12.7% over the past decade (California Youth Authority, 1999). Hmong and Lao youth from California's South Central Valley overrepresent the approximately 1,200 APIs currently detained. Increased API detainment also reflects the broader pattern of increased incarceration over the past decade even where overall crime rates in the United States decreased (Snyder, 2000).

Youth arrest data from San Francisco and Alameda (which includes Oakland) counties indicates high arrest rates for a number of API ethnic groups (see Table III). In San Francisco, Samoans far exceed all groups with a 59% arrest rate, significantly higher than the second most arrested group, African Americans, at 34%. With African Americans, Samoans, Laotians, and Vietnamese are among the top four arrested groups by arrest rate.

National-level data also reveal significant trends in API antisocial and risk behavior, two behavioral indicators that may directly be associated with later delinquent involvement. The Adolescent Health Survey, a

Law enforcement officers, for instance, often misinterpret averted eye contact or silence in API youth as a sign of cunning, dishonesty or lack of remorse.

longitudinal, cross-ethnic survey of adolescents in grade 7-12, found the following in regard to Southeast Asian youth: 48% of Southeast Asians self-reported public

antisocial behavior compared to only 40% of non-APIs; 34% of Southeast Asians were involved in at least one fight during a one year period; 20% reported shoplifting; 15% damaged or stole property worth less than $50; 4% had used or threatened to use a weapon; and 4% reported being initiated into gangs in the previous year. Preliminary data from major research projects on youth and the developmental pathways toward delinquency indicate a strong associative link between violence or violent criminal offenses and prior histories of risk or antisocial behavior.[4] However, API youth in these studies comprise only a small portion of the sample size thus raising concern over the degree to which these findings can be generalized to represent the specific needs or experiences of at-risk API youth as a whole. For API groups, identifiable cultural

factors — the nature of immigration (refugee, voluntary, non-voluntary, etc), facility with language and literacy, culturally or familially-defined tolerances of violence, intergenerational conflict, tensions over national allegiance, value placed on education historically — appear to be associated with variable rates and entrances in delinquent behavior. Thus studies of violence etiology and prevention must also account for these variables.

Despite the increased entrance of APIs into the criminal justice system in the early 1980s, strategies for law agencies to better address unique API needs have not evolved. API youth with different language and cultural needs are often pooled together and treated with generic, often confusing institutional processes. Language and cultural difference increase the alienation and

Table III
San Francisco and Alameda (Oakland) Counties Juvenile
Arrest Rate (Number of Arrests) by Racial and Ethnic Group 1990

Ethnicity	Alameda County			San Francisco County		
	Total # of Arrests	Youths 10-17	Rate per 1,000	Total # of Arrests	Youths 10-17	Rate per 1,000
American Indian	22	978	22.4	19	266	71.4
Asian Indian	47	1,654	28.4	1	269	3.7
Black	5,592	27,131	206.1	2,806	8,345	336.2
Cambodian	18	561	32.1	0	272	0
Chinese	59	6,781	8.7	218	12,182	17.9
Filipino	108	6,301	17.1	59	4,483	13.2
Hawaiian	0	311	0	0	59	0
Hispanic	1,299	22,483	57.8	581	10,288	56.5
Japanese	4	721	5.5	9	492	18.3
Korean	11	903	12.2	5	618	8.1
Laotian	71	488	145.5	0	147	0
Samoan	32	169	189.3	225	383	587.5
Vietnamese	162	2,219	73	140	1,644	85.1
White	1,502	50,647	29.7	555	10,614	52.3

Sources: Alameda County Juvenile Probation Department; San Francisco Juvenile Probation Department; US Census.

misunderstanding between youth and their families and the criminal justice system. Law enforcement officers, for instance, often misinterpret averted eye contact or silence in API youth as a sign of cunning, dishonesty or lack of remorse. Inadequate services for proper legal representation often miscommunicate options or rights to families, which can lead to harsher sentencing outcomes. Together these factors place API youth at additional risk for neglect or mistreatment within a system that is already fraught with institutional bias. Unfortunately, improving this state of affairs – through increased language-appropriate services, decreased social work or probation case loads, and integration of non-Western correctional philosophies, for instance – poses substantial challenges to already overburdened resources.
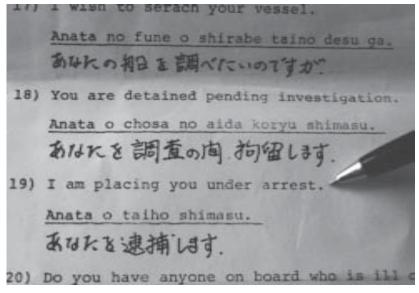
III. API POPULATION ISSUES

The history of APIs in the United States is also a history of the shifting political, economic and policy trends between Asia and the Pacific Islands and the U.S. Examples include:

- The Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, a xenophobic and opportunistic naturalization restriction that enabled the U.S. to benefit from Chinese labor without granting citizenship.

- The Gentlemen's Agreement of 1907 limited Japanese immigration to the U.S. until the 1924 National Origin Act, which ended Japanese immigration completely.

- The Alien Land Law of 1913 prevented "aliens ineligible for citizenship" from owning land in California.

- The wholesale incarceration of over 110,000 Japanese Americans in internment camps from 1942-1946.

Examples such as these frame the general historical picture of APIs in the U.S. Due to the far reaching effect of legislative action, API risk and protective factors have been intimately linked to federal and state-level policies. Today CBOs, local initiatives and advocacy projects continue to work within and sometimes against the broader structures imposed by policy and interest agendas in their efforts at improving the life outcomes for API populations.

The recent White House Initiative on Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders is a positive indication that API issues are on the federal agenda. Yet other policy initiatives during the past decade counter the impression of unwavering government endorsement. Notably, the Welfare Reform Act of 1996 will have disproportionate effect on API communities as 43% of the legislated cutbacks

are directed at immigrant and refugee programs. The transitional programs implemented to ease entrance into the employment sector have failed to address the resource and language needs of recent immigrants and refugees. When inadequate support structures are coupled with poor labor market participation, major initiatives such as this significantly impact API dispossession.

In California and Texas, two states with high API populations, important policy initiatives are continually contested around issues of immigration, bilingual instruction, Immigration and Naturalization Services (INS) protection and detention, and citizenship rights. These

discussions become models for and often drive national agendas. Bilingual education has emerged as a crucial national issue in part due to its impact far beyond the immediate issue of immigrant language acquisition. At core, debates around language acquisition and competency are debates around immigration policy and American diversity in general. There is little disagreement over the benefits of English acquisition; controversy emerges in attempting to formulate programs and criteria for best implementing programs.

INS has become a particularly influential actor in shaping the lives of API families and communities. Immigration policy can directly contribute to the fracturing and dispersion of families who lack resources, legal representation and a clear understanding of complex institutional processes. INS detention facilities have increasingly become holding spaces, simultaneously housing immigrants convicted of criminal offenses and immigrants with unclear citizenship statuses, all of whom are left, often for long periods, in indeterminate status between two nations.

Policy implementation and legal processes, can have a deleterious impact on API families and communities who often possess weak institutional representation or lack agencies to intervene on their behalf. Limited adult English proficiency often burdens API children with the daunting task of mediating a family's contact with the institutions of the outside world, often at the cost of miscommunication, compromised decision making and emotional strain.

Increasing political and legal representation, improving channels of language acquisition, increasing knowledge of citizenship processes and lobbying state and federal agencies around API issues are necessary first steps in empowering API communities.

EDUCATION

Education is a primary portal through which full participation in U.S. society can be obtained. API populations are confronted with significant obstacles in accessing and benefiting from educational institutions. In the 1974 Lau vs. Nichols case, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in favor of language minority students and established legal protections and curricular requisites to make educational attainment more accessible. However, students with limited English skills continue to face obstacles in acquiring the English proficiency needed to participate in and benefit from the educational process. Many of these challenges derive from cultural factors relating to language skills and acquisition – including non-English speaking home environments; devaluation, mistrust or misunderstanding of the educational system; orally-based cultural traditions that conflict with mainstream emphases on literacy; and lack of language-appropriate models for English acquisition.

In California, approximately 1.5 million K-12 students are designated as English Language Learners (ELL) (http://www.ed.gov). This figure represents 41% of all ELL students nationwide. API languages or dialects represent 7

of the top 10 non-English languages spoken by California students. High degrees of undereducation and illiteracy characterize many recent immigrant cohorts. In 1990, 55% of Hmong, 41% of Cambodian, and 34% of Lao immigrants had not completed the equivalent of the 5th grade (President's Advisory Commission on Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, 2001), and only 6% of

According to FBI data , API arrests in the U.S. increased 726 percent between 1977 and 1997.

Cambodian, 3% of Hmong, 7% of Non-Hmong Laotian, and 17% of Vietnamese Americans have managed to complete a college education compared to the national average of 21% (Sok, 2001). These figures highlight the sharp degree of dissonance that can exist among U.S. societies even within cultures. Often new immigrants from non-literate, subsistence agrarian economies face additional challenges in acclimating to the institutionalized educational systems and market economies of their new homes.

The needs of ELL and API students with special language concerns are not being met by the current system. A 1990 study found that only 36% of students who were ELL had been identified for special assistance (http://www.ed.gov). ELL students comprise a disproportionate number of school suspensions and drop-outs, yet a recent study from the U.S. Department of Education found that two-thirds of the students in need of bilingual services did not receive them. In some cases the "model minority" myth of API exceptionalism contributes to the reproduction of API failure. A study of APIs in the California State University system found that more than 50% of incoming students who were ELL failed writing proficiency tests suggesting that teachers passed students who were conversationally but not academically fluent in English.

Concerns over the education of API youth are further compounded by the entrenched problems of public education generally. Minimum efforts for addressing API educational needs include better data collection, screening and documentation of language needs among API student populations; development of new curricula that accounts for specific cultural and language needs; increased state and federal resources and commitment to bilingual programming; and increased familial and community involvement in influencing educational agendas.

LABOR AND EMPLOYMENT

Labor conditions and workforce participation are critical indicators of the current state of APIs in the U.S. The discourse on API employment is characterized by two concerns. First is the significant pool of APIs who have successfully entered the professional labor strata. Despite their success, however there are indications that a "glass ceiling" often prevents them from occupying top-tier

positions of influence in their fields – limited high management promotion rates in Fortune 500 companies or low tenure rates in colleges and universities, for instance. APIs are underrepresented in supervisory positions in 92% (23 of 25) of federal agencies who reported employment data (President's Advisory Commission on Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, 2001).

Although the glass ceiling represents documentable cases of bias in many instances, the glass ceiling critique is only applicable to those APIs who have achieved some degree of entrance into the professional workforce. Dispossessed and marginalized API communities who struggle to even enter the labor market present a second set of concerns. Recent immigrants and those arriving from poor, rural and war-torn environments present a wholly different portrait. Poverty rates for Southeast Asians in 1990 were among the highest of any social group and far exceeded the national average. In fact, compared to the national poverty rate (10%), two-thirds of Hmong and Laotian-Americans live in poverty (see Table I).

For underemployed and undereducated API populations, racial and linguistic discrimination and harassment in the workplace can become the defining features of their labor experience. Immigration policy often amplifies the challenges of stable employment as APIs are locked into low-paying, abusive and exploitative labor arrangements while their citizenship process is completed. A worker's tenuous immigration status can lend itself to the abuses of coerced labor in sweat shops or other highly exploitative conditions. Workplace discrimination is often difficult to combat or redress as employees must weigh the legal costs of litigation for compensation with the possibility of reinstatement into already abusive conditions. API laborers often lack access to information or legal representation that could further strengthen their collective agency against workplace abuses.

HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

Domestic health and well-being is another arena of priority for API communities. Here culturally competent methods of intervention can be especially effective in addressing the unique social and cultural factors that shape API risks and well-being. Domestic violence, for instance, exhibits culturally specific characteristics. The prevalence of API domestic abuse is itself difficult to capture because of internal sanctions against speaking out against one's family or community and perceptions of shame and need for collective harmony within some API cultures. When families are forced to rely on the male head of household during the immigration process, women and children are additionally disempowered by the settlement experience and can feel locked into abusive circumstances. Assertions of patriarchal control can be amplified in new social contexts in which immigrants settle. Espiritu (1997) found that men generally lose social and economic status through migration while women gain status, an experience that can threaten the balance of domestic relationships and authority. A survey conducted by the Immigrant California

Coalition for Immigrant Rights found that 25% of Filipinas surveyed had experienced domestic violence either in their country of origin, in the U.S., or both (http://endabuse.org/programs/immigrant). In an interview with 150 immigrant Korean women in Chicago, Song (1996) found that 60% of the sample reported being battered.

Oppressive constraints on gender roles, forced arranged marriages, and elder and patriarchal abuse are often justified through references to the cultural practices of one's country of origin. Their normalization in culture also makes resisting them the source of shame, exclusion or more violence. The phenomenon of "hidden" domestic violence can also be attributed to the lack of linguistically accessible and culturally appropriate services and law enforcement which mean that domestic violence against API women, children and elders are greatly underreported. Linkages to outside intervention agencies are also mistrusted or discouraged. However, this does not suggest that Asian American women do not access outside help. In urban areas with large API populations, Asian American women may seek out shelters for protection. One agency in San Francisco sheltered approximately 300 women and their children between 1988-1993 (Furiya, 1993). Unfortunately, many abused women may not know about formal services that could help them. Lum (1998) discusses several factors that may contribute to the perception that family violence is not a significant problem. These include researchers ignoring minority experiences in general and Asian Americans in particular, inherent complexity of the diverse Asian American subgroups, and the underutilization of outside services such as mental health organizations that give the impression that Asian Americans do not have similar needs for such resources when, in fact, they do.

Lastly, the phenomenon of illegally trafficking girls and women as cheap labor or sex workers is a growing problem. It is critical for researchers, CBOs, health and social service providers and other advocates to work toward making visible and problematic these cultural and historical

structures of violence.

Attention to the specific cultural needs can also enhance the provision of mental and physical health services to API communities. As a whole, APIs are less at risk for many health status indicators than other social groups. However, when disaggregated by ethnicity and gender, a different picture of API risk is presented. Vietnamese American women, for instance, have the highest rates of cervical cancer of any ethnic group in the U.S. while cancer rates are also higher for many types in Korean and Southeast Asian women (The Women's Foundation, 2001).

Studies seeking to understand differential rates of mental disturbance among API groups are often discrepant and inconclusive. Yet, there is strong evidence suggesting that APIs generally wait longer than other racial populations to seek mental health services, often to the point of severe disturbance, regardless of ethnicity, age, gender, or geography (Sue, et. al., 1976). Resource underutilization is often ascribed to culturally-conditioned notions of shame and stigma around mental well-being, different conceptions of mental health and cultural inadequacies in treatment modalities. Culturally competent intervention models must account for the ways cultural difference shapes social experiences, including increasing language-competent providers, incorporation of non-Western treatments, changing the ideologies that make health concerns shameful and better educating API communities on the benefits of early treatment.

Finally, one particular topic that has serious ramifications for the health and well-being of APIs is hate crime. According to the National Asian Pacific American Legal Consortium (NAPALC) (1997), violence and hate crimes against APIs have increased steadily throughout the latter half of the 1990s. NAPALC's report also found an alarming increase in reports of hate incidents against South Asians, and in light of the September 11, 2001 attacks on the World Trade tower, this is a notable concern. South Asians may even be more at risk for racially motivated hate crimes. Responding to and preventing such violence will require improved data collection, training of law enforcement personnel and community outreach and education, as well as continuing to address racial bias in American society.

IV. EMPOWERING API COMMUNITIES

FUNDING, PROGRAMS AND EVALUATION

The identification and cultivation of suitable funding sources remains a crucial task for improving the state of programming and service provision for API communities. But mediating the needs, expectations and interests of an array of stakeholders makes necessary improvements in this area a primary challenge.

The continuity and delivery of funding to local actors is often contingent upon a generalized criteria and quantifiable demonstrations of success. Local, innovative API program initiatives, however, are often not well served by evaluation expectations that rely on standardized "best practices" models of accountability. The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention's (OJJDP) "A" list of 10 exemplary models of best practices does not include one program that addresses the specific and unique needs of API populations (Elliot, 1998).

Programs serving API communities are expected to fit into a general model of outcome-based success. The dominant evaluative paradigm, exemplified by the one established by the Department of Education, requires that programs are replicable, have two outside evaluators, and demonstrate quantifiable success (http://www.ed.gov). By applying universal criteria to programs that are diverse — by client pool size, ethnic population, orientation, funding size or duration – the identification, development and support of innovative and context-sensitive projects is undermined, even discouraged.

Accountability and evaluation measures can also negatively impact the development and scope of community programs. Gang research, for instance, an acknowledged area of high priority, is paradoxically underfunded and not pursued by CBOs due to the difficulty associated with documenting measurable change and efficacy with that population. When program accountability is difficult to establish in brief time intervals or with inflexible performance-based criteria, programs are placed in the difficult position of either producing quick results or losing funding. As a result CBOs elect to pursue safer, more amorphous projects such as "crime prevention" to ensure continued support under less demanding accountability structures. To this end, CBOs should be encouraged to take a more active role as knowledge producers, contributing information, innovations and practices to the broader API discourse and thereby actively shaping the salient themes of its agenda.

Significant changes must develop in the overall

relationship and orientation of all stakeholders to redress the current state of program funding and development. By reducing the fragmentation between CBOs, foundations, government and criminal justice agencies, the API community will benefit from the promotion and exchange of more effective models and diversified intervention strategies. Broad collaboration should be combined with local models that address specific community needs. No one model should be taken as the paradigm of predictive success. Incorporating this notion as an approach to program support will encourage innovation and empower communities to highlight their specific needs in driving funding agendas.

Promoting the visibility of API needs in the eyes of public and private funding agencies is a challenging, incremental process. The NCCD has found that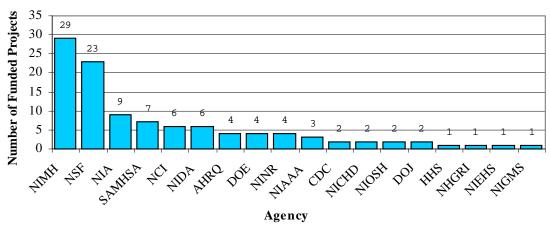 over the past two years, only 121 of approximately 10,000 foundations have expressed a programmatic interest in API issues. Furthermore, over the last decade, federal agencies have only funded approximately 107 projects catering to API communities (see Figure I).

Potential funders must be called upon to assess programming priorities and outcome expectations in light of innovative or pioneering projects and be compelled to commit resources to meet the emergent needs of diverse populations. Funding initiatives should include steps for capacity building and resource development that will ensure self-sufficiency after terms of funding end.

An Agenda for Action

The API Symposium marked a crucial step in the continued effort to make visible and address the unmet needs of the API population. There are both general and specific concerns that must be addressed in the course of

FIGURE I:
NUMBER OF FEDERALLY FUNDED PROJECTS INVOLVING API POPULATION BY FEDERAL AGENCY, 1990 - 2001

Source: CRISP database, 1990 –2000 (see Appendix for list of federal agencies).

creating the conditions for the full participation of APIs in U.S. society. Generally, perceptions and representations of the API community as a homogenous monolith must be challenged. APIs are an aggregate of diverse national and ethnic populations with different political, economic and cultural histories. To better account for these different experiences, culturally competent measures and models must be developed and utilized in the provision of service to APIs. Specifically, cultural competence can be incorporated into all of the areas that affect API life outcomes – education, employment, health services, law and legal services, crime and delinquency, domestic issues, community empowerment and capacity building. The following action agenda highlights some of the prominent points of intervention and transformation regarding the unmet needs of API communities.

- Ensure more rigorous and accurate data collection practices regarding API ethnic communities among all government, research and service-providing agencies.
- Develop culturally competent tools, programs and evaluative measures at each level of intervention including program implementation, outcome assessment, risk and protective factors, project development and funding.
- Government, foundation and other funding sources

must re-evaluate timeframe and funding timelines to better encourage and support project innovation, incremental development and more project-specific indicators of outcome-based success.

- Document and support the need for funding key projects that may not have quantifiable indicators of success such as gang research.
- Federal, state and local policy agendas must address the specific needs of particular API ethnic groups as well as the shared concerns of the broader API population.
- Develop API youth interventions that draw on the participation of and collaboration between the youth, peers, families, educators, community stakeholders, social service agencies, law enforcement and local government in comprehensive strategies of action.
- Develop strategies for empowering local communities to gain voice in municipal and state policy discussions. Work to insert API issues into public discourse.
- Seek political empowerment and representation, particularly for those most marginalized by economic, language or other circumstances.
- Develop a comprehensive plan for action that links best practices models with prominent stakeholders within a broader community plan.

ENDNOTES

[1] Asians and Pacific Islanderscomprise about 10.2 million and Pacific Islanders about 400,000 of this figure. US Census Bureau, SF-1 2000 (Washington, DC: US Census Bureau, 2000).

[2] In 1997, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) drafted its Standards for Maintaining, Collecting and Presenting Federal Data on Race and Ethnicity as a means to better ensure accuracy in data collection. All federal agencies are required by this policy to report accurate racial and ethnic data by January 1, 2003 (President's Advisory Commission on Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders).

[3] A database of API surnames was developed by the API Center reflecting the most common correspondence between ethnicity and name. By filtering arrest and other data through the surname database, individuals whose ethnicity is designated as 'other' can be reclassified into a specific ethnic category.

[4] These projects include The Denver Youth Survey, Pittsburgh Youth Survey and the Rochester Youth Development Study.

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APPENDIX

Full Titles for Federal Organizations Used in Figure 1

NIMH   National Institute of Mental Health
NSF   National Science Foundation
NIA   National Institute of Aging
SAMHSA   Substance Abuse & Mental Health Services Administration
NCI   National Cancer Institute
NIDA   National Institute on Drug Abuse
AHRQ   Agency for Healthcare Research & Quality
DOE   Department of Education
NINR   National Institute of Nursing Research
NIAAA   National Institute of Alcohol Abuse & Alcoholism
CDC   Centers for Disease Control & Prevention
NICHD   National Institute on Child Health & Human Development
NIOSH   National Institute for Occupational Safety & Health
DOJ   Department of Justice
HHS   Department of Health & Human Services
NHGRI   National Human Genome Research Institute
NIEHS   National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences
NIGMS   National Institute of General Medical Sciences

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For additional copies of this report or to learn more about the Asian/Pacific Islander Youth Violence Prevention Center, please visit the website above or contact the API Center directly.