

# Understanding Elder Abuse in the Chinese Community

The Role of Cultural, Social, and Community Factors

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Elder Abuse and its Prevention

A Public Workshop of the Forum on Global Violence Prevention

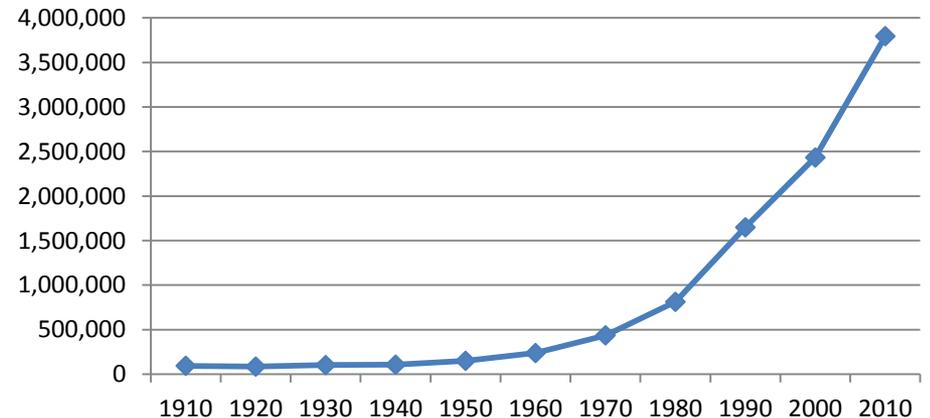
Institute of Medicine

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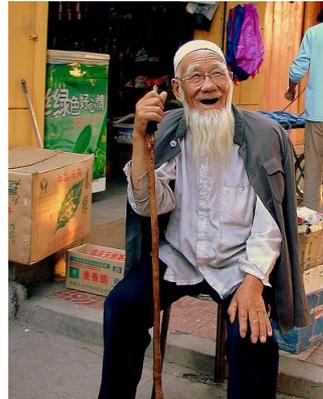
# Chinese Aging Population

- By 2050, 1 out of 4 of the world's elderly population will be Chinese
- The 4:2:1 family structure
- U.S. Chinese population
  - The oldest, largest, and among the fastest growing Asian American sub-population

**Total U.S. Chinese Population: 1910-2010**



# Cultural and Linguistic Diversity



水	灃	灃	灃	水	灃	水	水	water
灃	灃	灃	灃	灃	灃	灃	灃	bog
雷	雷	雷	雷	雷	雷	雷	雷	thunder
風	風	風	風	風	風	風	風	wind
山	山	山	山	山	山	山	山	mountain
地	地	地	地	地	地	地	地	earth
天	天	天	天	天	天	天	天	heaven
Qū wén	Qū wén	Dǎ zhān	Xiǎo zhān	Lǐ shā	Cǎo shū	Bǎ fēn shū	Kǎi shū	Xíng shū
antiquity	around 800 b.C.	800-200 b.C.	around 209 b.C.	around 200 b.C.	around 200 b.C.	very short around 100 b.C.	around 400	around 400



Traditional	開	圖	樂	學
Simplified	开	图	乐	学
	Open	Picture	Happy	Learn

Cantonese	Néih Hóu	Dōjeh	Deui m̀h jyuh	M̀h'gōi.
Mandarin	Nǐ Hǎo	Xiè Xiè	Duì Bu Qǐ	Bú kèqì.
	How are you?	Thank you.	Sorry.	You're welcome.

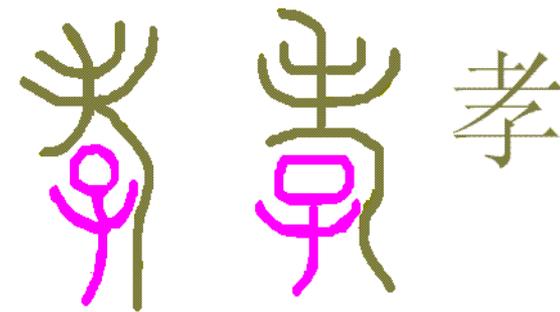
# Cultural Traditions

- Filial piety tops all values

*“Rearing children is protective against older age and frailty.”*

*“Expand the respect of the aged in one’s family to that of other families; expand the love of the young ones in one’s family to that of other families.”*

- The value of harmony
- Collectivism
- The concept of face and fatalism



# Crossroads: Chinese Families

- Increased life expectancy of seniors
- Increasing financial dependency
- Social change brought by urbanization
- “The Filial Piety Contract”
  
- U.S. Chinese families are transforming from traditional collective culture to Western society’s emphasis on individualism
- Immigration and acculturation stress
- Linguistic and cultural barriers to health care

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**How Do U.S. Chinese  
Older Adults View  
Elder Mistreatment?  
Findings From a  
Community-Based  
Participatory  
Research Study**

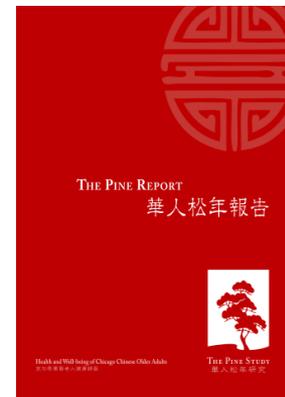
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# The PINE Study

- Academic-community partnership guided by community-based participatory research (CBPR) approach
- Chinese Health, Aging, and Policy Program at Rush University, Northwestern University, and the Chinese American Service League as main community partner
- Community Advisory Board

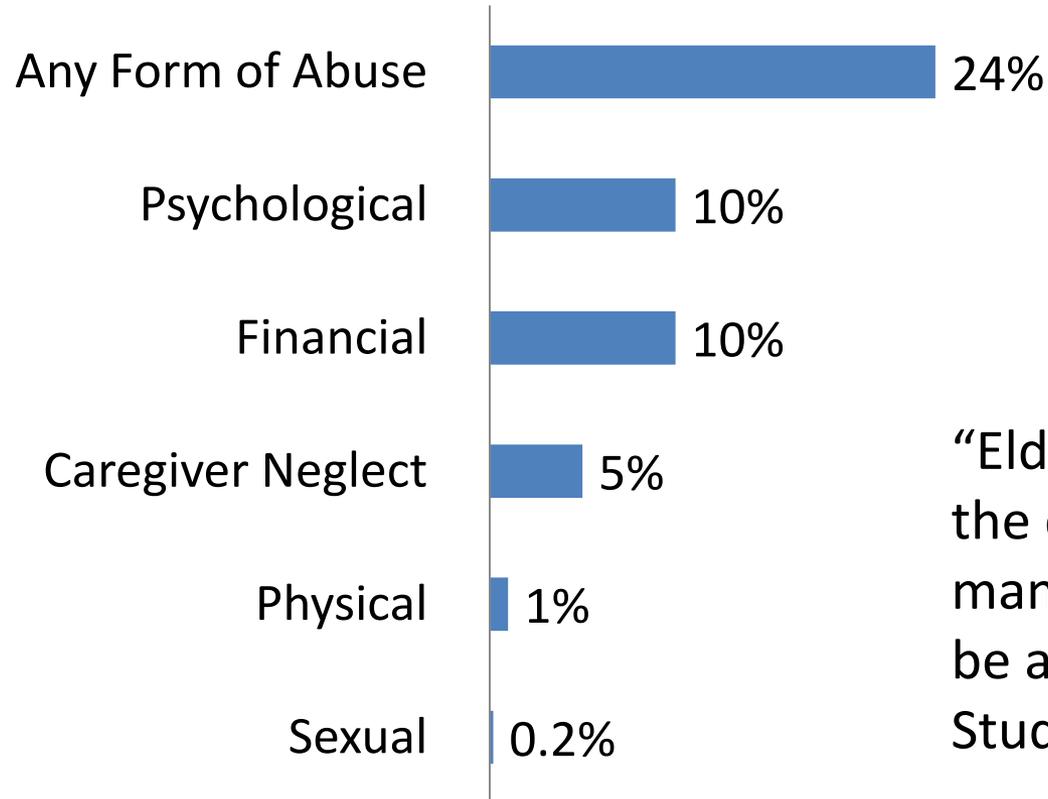


## Chinese American Service League



A nurturing hub within the heart of Chinatown, the Chinese American Service League (CASL) connects families and individuals of all ages with the vital support they need to flourish physically, economically, mentally and socially, enabling them to thrive and contribute to the greater Chicago community.

# Prevalence of Elder Abuse

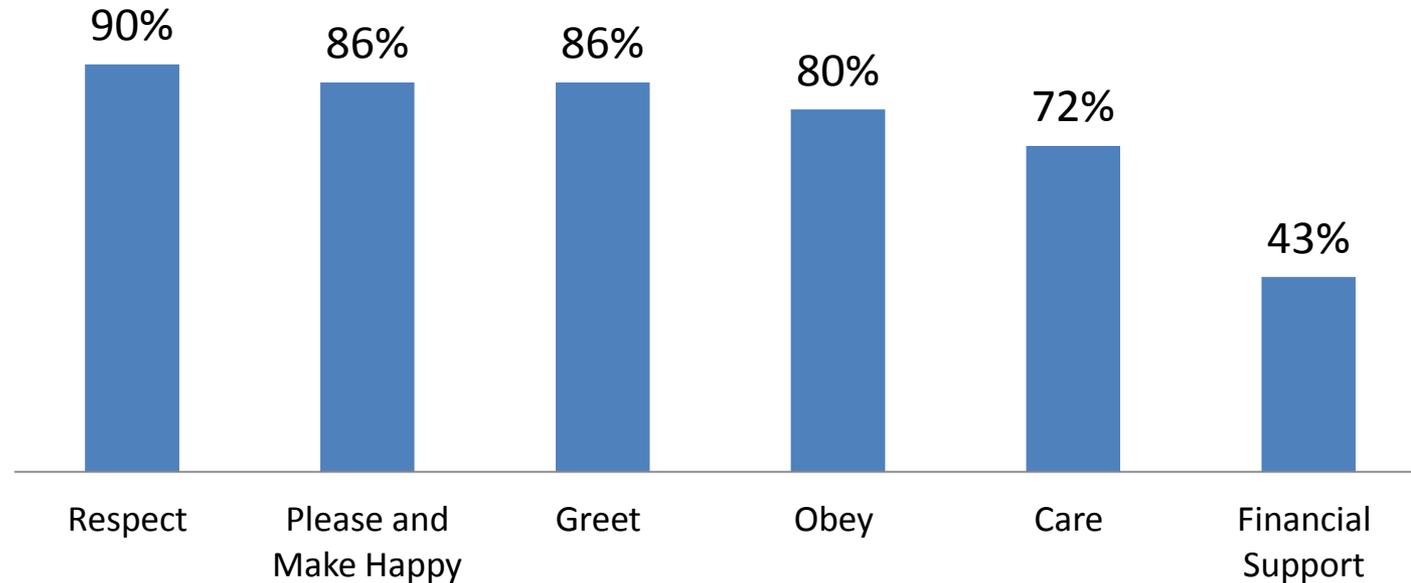


“Elder abuse is a problem in the community. There are many cases and so it should be a focus for discussion.” - Study Participant

# Cultural Perceptions of Elder Abuse

- Psychological abuse
  - Considered worse than physical abuse
    - “(….)The most serious one is psychological abuse , like saying, go to die early. Cursing is abusive because it makes people sad.” - Study Participant
    - “Elder abuse is when the younger generation yell at their parents, not talking to them, ignoring them, not respecting them are examples of mistreatment.”- Study Participant
- Caregiver neglect
  - Considered as the most common form of abuse
- Financial exploitation
- Physical abuse
- Abandonment

# Changing Expectations for Filial Piety

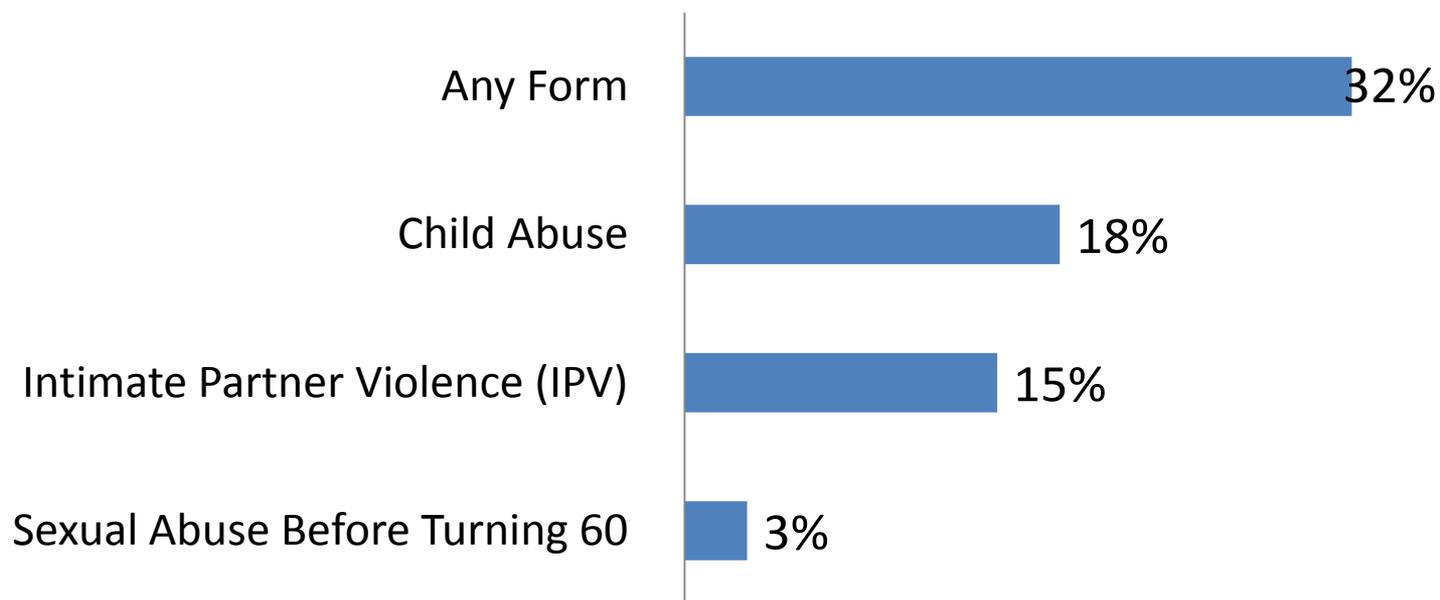


“If your children are kind to you, you naturally feel happy. But if they are bad to you, you will not feel good even if you have money. My understanding is that for most of Chinese people, their children do not feel concern about their parents anymore. That is due to American influences. It is to take care of yourself only.” - Study Participant

# Life Course and Victimization



## Elder Abuse Victims Who Experienced Other Forms of Violence



# Psycho-social Impact of Elder Abuse

- Depression

“My thought is that depressed seniors may sit at home and feel helpless. What if then they are ill-treated by their children? That would make the situation even more alarming .” - Study Participant

- Loneliness

- Worsening social isolation

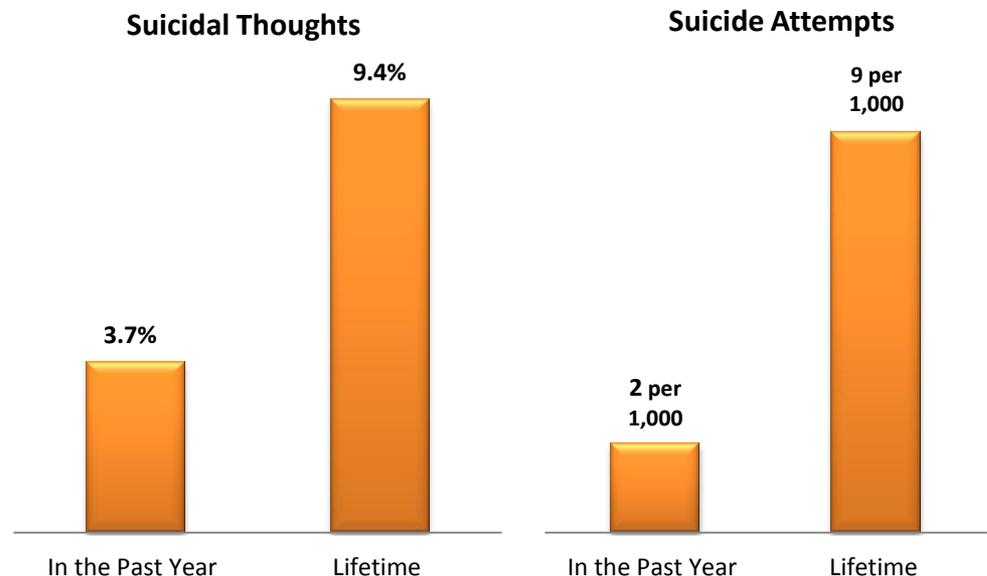
“(...)But for most of the abuse cases I know of, these seniors would just sit at home and not talk about it because it is shameful. Or they just don't have any one to talk to.” - Study Participant

# Psycho-social Impact of Elder Abuse

- Suicidal behaviors

“You might not agree with me. But sometimes when I feel bad about things I would rather swallow a pill and die as long as it is not too painful.” - Study Participant

“I didn’t want to live. I wanted to die. I didn’t know what to do with myself. I felt trapped there (in the home with adult children).” - Study Participant



# Perceived Help-Seeking Barriers to Elder Abuse

- Cultural barriers

- Stigma

- “There is a saying in Chinese that what happens in the family, stays in the family. Abused victims would not want to share because they do not want to bring shame to the family.” - Study Participant

- Fears

- Problem recognizing abuse

- Social barriers

- Structural barriers

- Unaware of resources

- Lack of accessibility

# The Role of the Community

- The key role of community in prevention and intervention

“Other than these (CBOs), there is no other organization that handles it (abuse cases)” - Study Participant

- Community support in nurturing filial piety values and intergenerational relationships

“It does not mean that the young people would neglect their old parents. It is because immigrant children need to make a living in the U.S. They cannot take care of their parents. The only way is to turn to community centers.” - Study Participant

- CBPR research methodology



# Next Steps

- Community partnerships
- Expanding research agenda
- Practical implications
- Policy implications