Asian American Mental Health Fact Sheet

- In the US, the Asian-American population is rapidly increasing; during 2002-2003, the population increased 3.8%, more than triple the growth rate of the entire US population.¹
- Asian Americans are less likely than whites to use mental health services.² Specifically, Asian Americans have the lowest utilization for mental health services and are more likely to have psychotic diagnoses in inpatient and outpatient settings.³
- Depression that occurs in Asian American children and adolescents can be associated with significant morbidity and mortality.⁴
- Chinese, Filipino, Japanese, and Korean immigrants consistently report higher rates of depressive symptoms than whites.⁵
- The prevalence rate of depressive diagnoses in adolescence is also different in Asian Americans from that in whites. This diagnosis is less likely in Asian American boys than in white boys, whereas depression is more prevalent in Asian American girls than in white girls.⁶ In fact, Asian American adolescent girls have the highest rates of depressive symptoms of all racial/ethnic and gender groups.⁷
- Suicide rates in Asian American adolescents and young adults are higher than in white youth and young adults.⁸ Among women aged 15-24, Asian American girls have the highest suicide mortality rates across all racial/ethnic groups.⁹
- During adolescence, Asian Americans often face the double stresses of living up to family traditional experience at home and having to adapt to Western cultural values at school. These diverging cultural expectations can cause identity crises for youths.¹⁰
- In a 2001 study of 144 Asian American HS students, students that were “separated” (who had higher orientation toward ethnic culture and low orientation towards mainstream culture) experienced greater depression than those who were assimilated.¹¹

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³ Sue, S. “Mental Health” Confronting Critical Health Issues of Asian and Pacific Islander Americans, ed. Zane, N; Takeuchi, D; Young, K; Los Angeles, CA:1994


⁵ Hurh, WM, Kim KC Uprooting and Adjustment: A Sociological Study of Korean Immigrants' Mental Health Macomb Il: Western Illinois University, 1998


¹⁰ Lim R (editor), Du N Clinical Manual of Cultural Psychiatry 2006; 88

• The stigma of having a mental illness is the most significant obstacle preventing Asian Americans from seeking help.\textsuperscript{12} A recent study through the internet showed that Asian Americans between ages 16 and 29 held greater stigma beliefs associated with depression treatment related to friends, employers, and family.\textsuperscript{13}
• Asian American college students report higher levels of depressive symptoms than white students.\textsuperscript{14}
• In a 2005 presentation addressing Asian American Mental Health at Cornell University, Asian American students at Cornell committed 50% of completed student suicides, while also accounting for 35% of psychiatric hospitalizations and 25% of medical leaves, even though they make up 17% of the entire Cornell population. Asian American students were also more likely to report problems with stress, sleep, sexually or physically abusive relationships and hopelessness.\textsuperscript{15}
• Asian American adolescent boys are twice as likely as whites to have been physically abused, and three times as likely to report sexual abuse\textsuperscript{16}
• 71% of Southeast Asians meet the criteria for a major affective disorder (which includes depression), with Hmong (85%) and Cambodians (81%) showing the highest rates.\textsuperscript{17} Moreover 70% of Southeast Asian refugees are found to have post-traumatic stress disorder.\textsuperscript{18}
• Among Asian American adolescents, studies have shown that cigarette, alcohol, and marijuana use may be correlated to self-reported high depression levels and low self-esteem.\textsuperscript{19}

\textsuperscript{4}Some facts presented were obtained from the National Asian Women’s Health Organization website (\url{www.nawho.org})

\textsuperscript{12} Ibid; 108
\textsuperscript{14} Liu W, Yu EH, Chang C, Fernandez. The Mental Health of Asian American Teenagers: A Research Challenge In Stiffman AR, Davis LE (Eds.), Ethnic Issues in Adolescent Mental Health (p.92-112)
\textsuperscript{15} Wong WK, Counseling and Psychological Services presentation entitled “Breaking the Silence” 3/10/05
\textsuperscript{17} Sue DW, Frank A. A typological approach to the Psychosocial Study of Chinese and Japanese American College Males Journal of Social Issues, 1973, 20:142-148
\textsuperscript{19} Otsuki, T, Substance Use, Self-Esteem, and Depression Among Asian American Adolescents, WestEd 2005, Baywood Publishing Co., Inc.