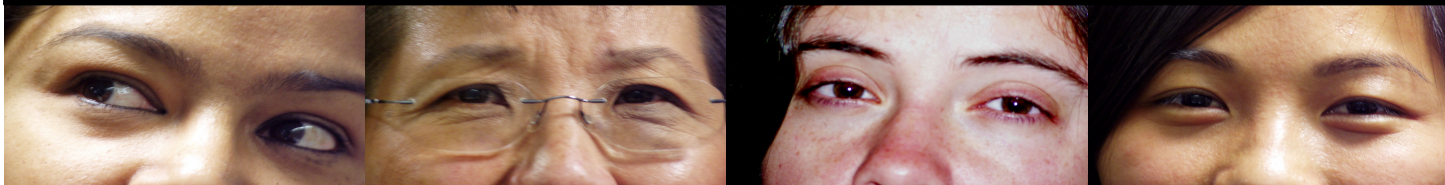


# "SMART, BEAUTIFUL.... MAYBE IT'S CONTRACEPTION."



research findings of the California Young Women's Collaborative, San Francisco State University

## OUR STUDY

Women in their 20s are at greatest risk for unintended pregnancies<sup>1</sup>. This is one of the first studies to systematically examine the contraceptive behaviors of Asian and Pacific Islander (API) American women, specifically Chinese and Filipina young women. We also examine how culture and access to health care influence these practices.

## BACKGROUND

- Race/ethnicity is an important influence on contraceptive method choice and is associated with contraceptive failure and unintended pregnancies<sup>2-4</sup>.
- API women are less likely to use hormonal contraception and more likely to use male condoms and withdrawal than White American women<sup>1, 3, 5</sup>.
- Growing evidence suggests a trend among APIs for higher prior pregnancy histories compared to White Americans<sup>6,7</sup>.

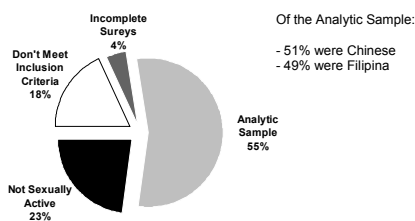
In order to promote effective contraceptive use within this population, it is important to understand how culture and access to health care are related to API women's contraceptive behaviors. This study specifically examines the role of maternal attitudes and communication about sexuality, as well as the role of Family PACT, on Chinese and Filipina women's contraceptive practices.

## METHODS

Undergraduate Chinese and Filipina women at San Francisco State University (SFSU) were recruited via email to participate in a 20-30 minute online survey.

Of the 315 surveys received, 172 women comprised our analytic sample (sexually active, heterosexual Chinese or Filipina women).

Distribution of Total Sample N=315



## Demographic Characteristics

- Women ranged in age from 18-24, with an average age of 21 years.
- 82% of our sample was U.S. born. On average, the foreign-born women had lived over two-thirds of their lives in the U.S.
- Filipina women were more likely to be Catholic or Protestant, compared to Chinese (99% vs. 68%).
- Filipinas came from slightly higher socioeconomic backgrounds than Chinese.

## OUR FINDINGS

### Sexual Activity

Chinese were less likely than Filipinas to be sexually active (37% vs. 18% had never had intercourse). Nationally, 18% of women age 20-24 have never had intercourse<sup>9</sup>.

Similar to national data, the average age of sexual onset was 17 years old<sup>9</sup>.

- 17% of Chinese and 15% of Filipinas had a prior history of pregnancy. In the general population, 17% of women ages 20-24 become pregnant yearly<sup>10</sup>.
- Of those who had prior pregnancy histories, 8% of Chinese and 42% of Filipinas had children. Nationally, approximately 60% of pregnancies result in births<sup>10</sup>.

## Contraceptive Method Choice

The following is a table of the most commonly reported methods used by *contraceptors* (92% of women used contraception).

Method	% of users
Condom	62
Pill	49
Withdrawal	44
EC*	19 Filipina 8 Chinese
Rhythm Method	10

\*EC=emergency contraception. The ethnic difference was marginally significant. Note: Percentages do not add up to 100% because more than one method could have been selected. Women were asked to report all methods used in the past 6 months.

- Women in this study were more likely to use condoms than 20-24-year-old women nationwide (62% vs. 36%)<sup>8</sup>.
- The percentage of women in the study who used the Pill was similar to national data (49% vs. 52.6%)<sup>8</sup>.
- API women in this study were much more likely to use withdrawal than women of this age group nationally (44% vs. 12%)<sup>8</sup>.
- Filipina women were slightly more likely than Chinese women to have used emergency contraception.
- A greater percentage of API women used the rhythm method compared to the general population of 20-24-year-olds (10% vs. 2.3%)<sup>8</sup>.

### Top Reasons for Condom and Pill Use

- Easy to use
- Effective against pregnancy

Women were more likely to state that condoms, rather than pills, were easy to obtain. (49% vs. 27%).

### Top Reasons for Withdrawal Use

- Last-minute option
- Partner wanted to use method

The use of withdrawal was found to be related to lack of education and communication from mothers regarding effective contraceptive methods. A major reason for withdrawal use was because it was a last-minute option. Health educators need to educate and encourage Chinese and Filipina women to take a more proactive approach to their sexual health.

Our study also found that API women are more likely to use condoms than hormonal birth control pills. Given that more women stated condoms were easy to obtain, one strategy for increasing pill use among Asian women may be to increase access to family planning services via enrollment in Family PACT. This process may be easier at a campus like SFSU, where Family PACT services are offered on campus.

Finally, Chinese and Filipina women received little sex education at home. It is critical that schools provide comprehensive sex education for this population to be equipped with the necessary education and skills to make informed decisions about their sexual health.

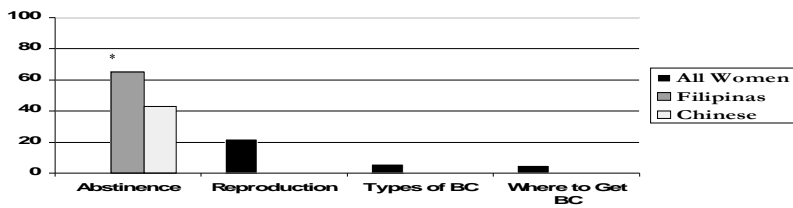
## FOR MORE INFORMATION

This brief represents some of the research findings of the California Young Women's Collaborative (CYWC), a youth-led research and social action project of the National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum. Please go to [www.napawf.org](http://www.napawf.org) or [www.myspace.com/cywc](http://www.myspace.com/cywc) to learn more.

## REFERENCES

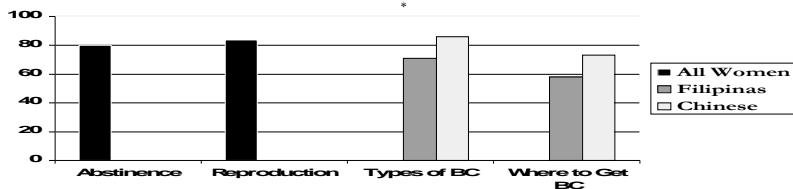
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- <sup>2</sup>Jones E, & Forrest J. Contraceptive failure rates based on the 1988 National survey of Family Growth. *Family Planning Perspectives*, 1992, 24:12-9.
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- <sup>4</sup>Stephen E, Rindfuss R, & Bean F. Racial differences in contraceptive choice: Complexity and implications. *Demography*, 1988, 25:53-70.
- <sup>5</sup>Kuss T. Family planning experiences of Vietnamese women. *Journal of Community Health Nursing*, 1997, 14:155-168.
- <sup>6</sup>Jones R, Darroch J, & Henshaw S. Patterns in the Socioeconomic Characteristics of Women Obtaining Abortions in 2000-2001. *Perspectives on Sexual and Reproductive Health*, 2002, 34:226-235.
- <sup>7</sup>Raine T, Harper C, Paukku M, & Darney P. Race, adolescent contraceptive choice, and pregnancy at presentation to a family planning clinic. *American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists*, 2002; 99:241-247.
- <sup>8</sup>Mosher W, Martinez G, Chandra A, Abma J, & Wilson S. Use of contraception and use of family planning services in the United States: 1982-2002. National Center for Health Statistics: *Vital Health Statistics*, 2004; 35:Table 11.
- <sup>9</sup>Finer L. Trends in premarital sex in the United States, 1954-2003. *Public Health Reports*, 2007; 122:73-78.
- <sup>10</sup>U.S. Teenage pregnancy statistics: National and state trends and trends by race and ethnicity. New York: Alan Guttmacher Institute, September 2006. <sup>11</sup>Family Pact Program Report FY 04/04, 2006. Submitted to the State of California, Department of Health Services, Office of Family Planning. San Francisco: University of California, June 2006.

### Percentage of Women Who Learned about Sex from Mom



\* significant difference between ethnic groups

### Percentage of Women Who Learned about Sex from School



\* significant difference between ethnic groups

## Sex Education

- In general, API women learned very little from their mothers. While about 60% were taught about abstinence, few learned details about sexual health.
- Most API women obtained knowledge about sexual health from school. Filipinas were less likely than Chinese to learn about contraceptive methods at school.

## Mothers Influence Women's Use of the Withdrawal Method

Mothers had a **STRONG EFFECT** on their daughters' use of withdrawal.

Women were **LESS LIKELY** to use the withdrawal method if they:

- were **more comfortable** talking to their moms about sex
- had **greater maternal approval** of their sexual behavior
- learned** about types of birth control from their mothers

## Importance of Family PACT

Family PACT is a state program that offers free or low-cost reproductive health services to low-income individuals.

Eligibility is based on an individual's personal income and insurance, not one's parents' income or insurance. The program seeks to increase access to family planning services by lowering cost barriers<sup>11</sup>.

- 19% of women stated they are currently enrolled in Family PACT, a program that is offered at SFSU.
- Women enrolled in Family PACT were over 3 times more likely to use the Pill than women not enrolled.
- APIs are underrepresented in Family PACT enrollment. Ten percent of APIs of reproductive health age meet the federal poverty level, but only 7% of Family PACT clients are API<sup>11</sup>.

## CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

API women in this study use less effective methods of contraception than the general population. These behaviors put Chinese and Filipina women at greater risk for unintended pregnancies.

A major focus of health education and research should be to increase the use of the Pill, encourage the continued use of the condom, and reduce the percentage of withdrawal and rhythm method use among APIs.