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Risk Factors Associated with Sexual Assault among
Asian Immigrant Women in Massage Parlors

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Abstract

Over the past decade, Asian immigrant women have had an increasing presence in the massage parlor industry. Despite that, little is known about the risk to women in these settings. Previous research has addressed health and physical risk factors, yet there are no specific studies on risk factors for sexual assault among Asian immigrant females who engage in sexual services in massage parlors. Thus, this study aims to examine the prevalence and risk factors for sexual assault against Asian immigrant women in massage parlors. Using existing interview data to examine the relationship between these factors and sexual assault (Chin et al., Manuscript being prepared for publication), four demographic/social/occupational factors were analyzed: —1) Korean versus Chinese; 2) type of sexual service provided in massage parlors; 3) amount of time women living in the United States; 4) coercion from owner/management. The result showed that coercion experience from the massage parlor owner or management and length of residence in the United States were predictive of sexual assault. The result highlights the need for awareness of sexual assault risk factors in Asian immigrant women in massage parlors.

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Risk Factors Associated with Sexual Assault among
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Introduction

Though some massage parlors provide only legitimate massage services, others provide sexual services upon customer reference. At times, women in these settings are coerced or forced to engage in sexual activity. While an epidemic of sexually oriented massage parlors already exists, violent crime against sex workers has been an issue of increased concern in the criminal justice system. Research shows that sex workers are more exposed to sexual assault than the general population (Farley & Kelly, 2000; Farley et al., 2005; Watts & Zimmerman, 2002). Sex workers are particularly susceptible to violence due to the exploitative nature of their work, segregation from other commerce, and their stigma and low social status. For example, Lowman and Fraser (1996) concluded that homicide rates among sex workers were up to 120 times higher than the general population (Lowman & Fraser, 1996; Salfati, James, & Ferguson, 2008; Bungay et al., 2012). More specifically, a broad body of literature has established that indoor sex workers are at risk for violence—both physical and sexual assault, but also unprotected sex (no condom use); exploitation by clients, owners, and management (labor and finance); and persecution by law enforcement agencies or public officers (Bungay et al., 2012; Choi & Holroyd, 2007; Han, 2012; Lewis, Maticka-Tyndale, Shaver, & Schram, 2005; Nemoto et al., 2004). However, there is limited research examining the risk factors for sexual assault among sex workers in sexually-oriented massage parlors, and the ethnic and demographic characteristics of these sex workers.

Throughout the past decade, the number of Asian immigrant women found in the massage industry and involved in sex work has increased (Bungay et al., 2013; Lever, Kanouse, & Berry, 2005). Previous research has found that massage parlors have become one of the major pipelines

for immigrant women across the U.S. to provide sexual services for money, especially for Asian immigrant women. Detailed studies show New York and Los Angeles to be major hubs of the massage parlor industry where Asian immigrant women provide sexual services (Bryant & Palmer, 1975; Deering et al, 2014; Han et al, 2016; Klausner, 1988; Nemoto et al, 2005; Raymord, Hughes & Gomez, 2001). According to Lever, Kanouse and Berry (2005), the majority of women in sexually- oriented massage parlors in Los Angeles were Asian—Korean and Chinese. In LA County specifically, nearly all licensed massage parlors are run by Koreans, and massage therapists are almost exclusively Korean immigrant women (Laver, Kanouse, & Berry, 2005). In contrast, Chinese immigrant women were found primarily in *unlicensed* massage parlors (Laver, Kanouse, & Berry, 2005). Although the Asian population is overrepresented in massage parlor work, relatively few empirical studies identify the heterogeneity of factors among Asian immigrant women and relevant risk factors for sexual assault. To date, there is a lack of empirical research examining Asian immigrant women sex workers, which are an increasingly majority ethnic group in the massage parlor industry (Shannon et al., 2009; Blanchard and Aral, 2010 Han, 2012; Zhang et al., 2007). Increased awareness and research of the sexual assault risk factors for violence among Asian immigrant women in massage parlors is necessary.

The current study aims to examine the prevalence of sexual assault against Asian immigrant women in massage parlors. Furthermore, this study aims to add to the existing literature by assessing the association between sexual assault and demographic/social/occupational factors. To this end, this paper will first provide an overview of the characteristics of Korean and Chinese immigrant women in massage parlors. It will then explore several relevant socio-occupational factors that may be related to sexual assault. Finally, the review will conclude by addressing the

aim of the current study, which is to examine the prevalence of sexual assault against Asian immigrant women in massage parlors and risk factors associated with sexual assault.

Chinese and Korean Immigrant Women in Massage Parlors

Asian immigrant women are at a high risk of violence, particularly as many are involved in sex work. In a study of Asian sex workers, nearly two-thirds of Asian women reported that they have experienced physical abuse, with some encountering serious abuse that required hospitalization (Nemoto, Operario, Takenaka, Iwamoto, & Le, 2003). One study suggested that masseuses' legal and immigration status may increase their likelihood of being victims of violence (Nemoto, Iwamoto, Wong, Le, & Operario, 2004). Within the group of Asian immigrant women, Korean and Chinese female sex workers appear to have different work environment contexts. As pointed out by Lever, Kanouse and Berry (2005), Korean massage parlors are mostly regulated, whereas Chinese massage parlors tend to operate illegally. Unlike unlicensed massage parlors, licensed massage parlors are a permitted business, although prostitution is illegal in both settings (Kanouse & Berry, 2005). Due to this difference and lack of regulation, women in Chinese massage parlors may be exposed to higher levels of violence such as sexual assault.

The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) (1998), addressed the significant international trafficking and prostitution rates among Chinese. The FBI report (1998) suggests a significant increase in human trafficking, sex trafficking, and prostitution within the current state of Asian crime. According to the FBI report (1998), nearly 50 % of those Asians who were involved in human trafficking and prostitution were Chinese, while only 7.3% were Korean. In interviews with Chinese immigrant women, some of them emphasized that they had experienced sexual assault and coercion while they were trafficked to the United States (Richard, 1999). Another study noted that Chinese massage parlors involved in international sex trafficking and drug trafficking are

predominantly run by Chinese gangs (Klausner, 1988). These data suggest that Chinese immigrant women in massage parlors are more exposed to sexual assault than Korean immigrant women. Thus, this study hypothesizes that Chinese immigrant women in massage parlors will experience higher rates of sexual assault than Korean immigrant women in massage parlors.

Penetrative Sexual Service and Non-Penetrative Sexual Service and Sexual Assault

Sexually-oriented massage parlors typically provide four types of services—manual stimulation or “hand jobs”, oral stimulation or “blow jobs”, “full-service” or penetrative intercourse, and mixed-service. The first two services do not involve any penetration whereas the latter two services may include sexual intercourse. The literature provides evidence that women who provide sexual services are at higher risk of sexual violence. Farley and Barkan (1998), for example, found that 68% of sex workers in San Francisco stated that they had been raped more frequently when they started providing sexual services on the street. Although the study was conducted among street sex workers, as opposed to indoor sex workers, the results suggest that sexual services involving sexual intercourse may signify a higher risk of sexual assault.

Raphael and Shapiro (2004) examined the prevalence of violence in different types of sex work venues by surveying 222 female sex workers in Chicago. High rates of sexual assault were found in exotic dancing venues, escort services venues, and drug houses where sexual services were provided. Although the highest prevalence of sexual assault appeared in penetrative sexual service venues—streets and hotels—the rates in sex work venues involving non-contact sexual services were also quite considerable. Unlike the previous study, workers in exotic dancing venues reported that customers use threats of rape as an intimidation tactic (Raphael & Shapiro, 2004). In addition to these threats, exotic dancers also reported a high level of sexual assault. A similar study in the United Kingdom was conducted to understand the prevalence of violence against sex

workers in different venues. This study found that those providing escort services reported a high prevalence of sexual assault, particularly rape (Church et al., 2001). These findings suggested that customers in exotic dancing and escort locales may assault sex workers to receive more services than they paid for (Church et al., 2001; Raphael & Shapiro, 2004).

Although there was no such research on sexual services without sexual intercourse and the risk of sexual assault, it appears possible that sexual services without sexual intercourse, such as a “hand-job” and/or a “blow-job,” may be associated with a higher risk of sexual assault than services including penetration. It is possible that female sex workers paid for “hand jobs” or “blow jobs” may be victimized by customers who wish to receive more services than paid for. Therefore, the study hypothesizes that women who provide non-penetrative sexual services will be more likely to experience sexual assault.

Challenges Facing New Immigrants and Immigrant Women in Massage Parlors

New immigrants experience more difficulties and challenges than those who have already migrated and adjusted to a new community and another culture. Previous research on the challenges of immigrants was conducted among new immigrants and refugee communities in metropolitan areas in the United States during 2004 to 2005. Both new immigrants and refugees face difficulties after they immigrate to the United States. Garrett (2006) highlighted the fact that new immigrants face language barriers, economic issues, emotional isolation, less access to services, discrimination, and social prejudice. Most participants in this study reported that they have difficulties with even basic tasks and errands like grocery shopping and using transportation. New immigrants and refugees have mentioned that they have suffered many problems due to a lack of language proficiency. Due to the language barrier, most new immigrants have limited access to information and are discouraged from seeking social benefits and/or government services

for which they might be eligible for. Furthermore, many undocumented immigrants emphasized that they often fear their lack of legal status and are reluctant to seek help, even in emergencies. Undocumented immigrants often believe that they have no rights (Garrett, 2006). This misconception and a lack of language skill discourages immigrant women from seeking help, hence making them vulnerable to dangerous situations.

Nemoto and colleagues (2003) examined occupational and psychological factors among Asian immigrant women in massage parlors. Because providing sexual services and working without a license are illegal in most states, Nemoto and colleagues (2003) found that workers often refused to report any incidents to police or law enforcement. Furthermore, Nemoto and colleagues (2003) suggested that customers often label Asian immigrant workers as defensive, quiet, and submissive and discriminate against these workers as a result of these stereotypes (Nemoto, Operario, Takenaka, Iwamoto, & Le, 2003). These stereotypes may influence customers' decision to assault Asian sex workers. Surprisingly, in the Zhang, Chin, and Miller's study (2007), Chinese sex workers have never reported their experiences of sexual assault and/or violence to police. Furthermore, if these women have lived in the United States for a short amount of time, they likely still face language barriers. All these factors play a vital role in exposing Asian immigrant sex workers to vulnerable situations and discouraging them from accessing help and information. These factors also suggest that Asian women in massage parlors who immigrated more recently are more likely to experience sexual assault.

Psychological Distress in Sex Work Venue

Working at commercial sex venues and doing sex work is associated with significant psychological distress (El-Bassel et al., 1997; El-Bassel, Simoni, Cooper, Glibert, & Schilling, 2001; Salina, Ram, & Jason, 2016). El-Bassel and colleagues (1997) conducted a study on

psychological distress among 346 sex workers from Harlem in New York City. Psychological distress was measured by the General Severity Index and eight of the nine Brief Symptom inventory subscales. The result showed that street sex workers experience a substantially high level of psychological distress, including symptoms such as somatization, depression, anxiety, hostility, psychoticism, and paranoid ideation compared to non-sex workers (El-Bassel et al., 1997). A more recent follow-up study emphasized the previous study's result. El-Bassel and colleagues (2001) later examined psychological distress among women in methadone clinics in New York City. Among a total of 280 women, 32% of participants reported that they were involved in selling sex for money and/or drugs. These sex workers experienced higher levels of psychological distress than those who were not involved in sex work (El-Bassel, Simoni, Cooper, Glibert, & Schilling, 2001). These results of previous studies confirm that women who provide sexual services are more likely to experience psychological distress than non-sex workers.

Psychological Distress due to Coercion from Owner and/or Management

In sex work venues, customers most often use verbal and physical coercion; however, in some cases, owners and management are the ones coercing their employees to engage in sexual reference. There should be a question about how coercion from ownership will affect an employee's psychological state. Australian research (Salina et al., 2016) studied how workplace violence impacts employees' psychological well-being. Most participants reported that they have experienced workplace violence while some reported serious physical and verbal abuse level, and being in psychological distress. The consequences of violence in the workplace are more than psychological distress (Salina, Ram, & Jason, 2016). Some of the literature has noted that workplace violence is correlated with anxiety, substance abuse, PTSD, and self-doubt (Franz et al. 2010; Jackson et al. 2002; Lee et al. 2015). Although the participants of these studies were not sex

workers or immigrant women, considering that a massage parlor is also a work venue and is highly exploitative, it is suggested that women in massage parlors will experience a high level of psychological distress if they are exposed to coercion involving physical and verbal abuse.

Commercial sex work venues have a particularly exploitative environment when compared to non-sex work (Farley & Kelly, 2000; Farley et al., 2005; Watts & Zimmerman, 2002) and has a significant impact psychologically (Lee et al., 2015; Salina, Ram, & Jason, 2016). Lee and colleagues (2015) highlighted that the experience of aggression showed a significant negative result on the participant's well-being and stress level. Symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder were also found among 17% of mental health nurses exposed to aggression and violence (Lee et al., 2015). Dick and Nadin (2011) found that employees who have experienced exploitation from small business owners or management in their workplace often did not acknowledge their experience as exploitation (Dick & Nadin, 2011).

These studies suggest that women who are exploited or experienced violence from ownership are more likely to be exposed to violent situations. A recent study on empowerment among sex workers found that women who have experienced coercion or who were involved in sex work felt less empowered than those who had not experienced coercion or who were not involved in sex work (Salina, Ram, & Jason, 2016). All these studies suggest that women who are involved in sex work and especially exposed to coercion from owner and/or management will be exposed to higher levels of violence. Due to psychological distress from coercion by ownership, workers in massage parlors are less likely to notify authorities even as the situation worsens. This could make workers more vulnerable to dangerous situations. Ultimately, these women may be more likely to accept and rationalize the coercion and violence.

Study Overview

The number of Asian immigrant women working in the sexually oriented massage parlor industry has significantly increased in the past decade (Bungay et al., 2013; Han et al., 2016). Research indicates that most women working in massage parlors are Korean and Chinese (Han et al., 2016; Laver, Kanouse, & Berry, 2005; Nemoto et al., 2005). Along with these two major ethnic populations, however, only a few empirical studies identify the heterogeneity in factors affecting Asian immigrant women in massage parlor venues. Prior research on sex workers has addressed external and internal problems among sex workers—physical health issues (especially HIV and condom use), language barriers, and lack of social service support—yet limited studies address sexual assault and risk factors (Shannon et al., 2009; Blanchard and Aral, 2010; Han, 2012; Zhang et al., 2007). Therefore, this study is intended to investigate the prevalence and risk factors for sexual assault against Asian immigrant women in massage parlors.

Method

Research Design

To examine the association between sexual assault and demographic, social, and occupational variables in Asian immigrant women in massage parlors, this study utilized a secondary data analysis. Original data was collected through face-to-face interviews with Korean and Chinese immigrant women in massage parlors in New York and Los Angeles Counties as part of a “Massage Parlor Project” (Chin et al., Manuscript being prepared for publication). The data was collected during 2014-2016 and funded by the National Institute of Health (NIH).

Participants

A total of one hundred and eighteen Chinese and Korean immigrant women who engage in sex work in massage parlors in New York and Los Angeles County were interviewed for up to

two hours. The participants' ages ranged from 21 to 63 years, with an average age of 45.35 years (SD= 9.69). The 62 women from New York State had an age range of 27- 66 years, with a mean age of 46.76 (SD= 9.26). The 54 women from Los Angeles County had an age range of 25- 65 years, with a mean age of 43.75 (SD= 9.83). Two participants were excluded from the data because they were neither Chinese nor Korean—they identified themselves as citizens of Hong Kong. At the time of the interviews, all participants had worked or were currently working in massage parlors and had provided sexual services. A few women who had previous work experience as a sex worker currently worked as owners or managers.

The participants received a \$100 cash incentive for participating in the interview. The participants were asked to refer other sex workers voluntarily to participate in the study. The referrers also received \$20-40 cash incentives based on the participant's eligibility. Regarding ethnicity, 43% (n = 50) of participants identified themselves as Korean and 56% (n = 66) identified themselves as Chinese. To determine their type of sexual service, four categories were included in the questionnaire: manual stimulation, oral stimulation, full-service and mixed service. The participant checked off all applicable categories and only the highest sexual service was considered. Among the participants, 62% reported that they were providing sexual service without intercourse, while 37% reported sexual services with vaginal and/or anal sex. In the questionnaire, the study used open-ended questions to distinguish the exact year when the participants arrived in the United States. Nearly half of the participants (49%) arrived in the United States in the last five years and the rest (51%) had been living in the United State longer than five years. Sixty-two percent of the participants reported that owners or management in the massage parlors had coerced them to perform sexual acts, and thirty-eight percent answered that they had not experienced coercion.

Material

Additional information such as demographic background information, interpersonal and contextual factors, health risks, legal aspects, and experiences with sexual assault and violence, were collected as part of the structured interview, which included both close-ended and open-ended questions. First, we asked socio-demographic questions such as acculturation, age, race, ethnicity, birthplace, current residence, language, marital status, and education. In regards of interpersonal and circumstance factors, health risks, legal aspects, and experience with sexual assault and violence, the information was collected by dichotomous and open-ended questions. For example, we asked about their experiences of massage parlors including refusal of clients, roles, working hours, and condom use, and then we asked them to explain their own experience based on their answers. At the end of the interview, the participants were asked if there is any information that the researcher should know or that they would like to provide voluntarily.

Procedure

The data collection was conducted through ads in Korean and Chinese newspapers, online recruitment on ethnic websites, onsite recruitment at massage parlors, referrals from participants and social service providers, and through direct contact made through courthouses in New York and Los Angeles Counties. Interviews were 60-90 minutes in-depth and in person, and were conducted by trained interviewers who were bilingual in English and either Korean or Chinese. The survey was authorized by the Institutional Review Board, and received a federal Certificate of Confidentiality. Many types of close-ended and open-ended questions were covered in the interview to identify whether the participants experienced any type of coercion such as physical and verbal abuse from owner or client. Based on the existing data, the social and occupational factors were defined as a) ethnicity [Korean vs. Chinese] b) sexual service (manual

stimulation and/or oral stimulation: without sexual intercourse versus full-service with sexual intercourse) c) amount of time the immigrant female masseuses lived in the United States (new immigrants: arrived within last 5 years vs. arrived more than after 5 years ago), and d) coercion involving physical and/or verbal abuse (coerced versus not coerced). The following experiences were defined as coercion: pressure to engage in sexual activities, inability to choose customers, and physical or verbal abuse from owner/management. “Sexual assault” was operationalized by asking participants if they had experienced sexual violence.

Data Analysis

The dependent variables were ethnicity, sexual service, length of residence in the United States, and coercion from owner/management. Descriptive statistic and chi-square analyses were conducted to examine the bivariate association between the variables and sexual assault. Next, a logistic regression statistical model was used in an attempt to identify possible risk factors for sexual assault. In the study, all statistical analyses were conducted by using IBM Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS, 2015).

Results

Table 1 shows descriptive statistics of sociodemographic data (Chin et al., Manuscript being prepared for publication). To examine the associations between social and occupational factors and sexual assault, qualitative interview data of 116 Chinese and Korean immigrant female sex workers in massage parlors were analyzed using a chi-squared test and logistic regression. Sixty-eight women (n = 68) reported that they had experienced sexual assault. Among these 68 women, 85.2 % reported that the perpetrator was a customer and 14.7 %, reported sexual assault from others, including undercover police officers who were cracking down on the massage parlors

and strangers such as robbers. None of the participants in this sample reported these assaults to law enforcement agencies.

Sexual Assault on Chinese Women versus Korean Women Among those who identified as having been sexually assaulted, 63% of the participants identified as Chinese ($n = 43$) and 36% of the participants identified as Korean ($n = 25$) (see Table 2). The result of the chi-squared test shows no significant association between ethnicity and sexual assault, $X^2 (1, N= 116) = 2.692, p = 0.101$.

Sexual Assault in Non-Penetrative Sexual Service (hand-job and oral-sex) versus Penetrative Sexual Service (vaginal-sex and anal-sex) All participants in this sample reported that they provided sexual services in the massage parlors we studied. Among those who reported providing sexual services (shown in Table 3), fifty-five percent of women ($n = 64$) reported providing non-penetrative sexual service (hand-job or blow-job) only and forty-four percent women ($n = 52$) reported providing penetrative sexual service (vaginal and anal service). If both types of service were provided, the higher contact (penetrative) service was counted. No significant relationship was found between the type of sexual service provided (penetrative versus non-penetrative) and sexual assault, $X^2 (1, N= 116) = 0.038, p = 0.845$. The relationship between sexual services with sex (vaginal sex and anal sex) and sexual assault rate were also found to share no significant relationship. See Table 3.

Sexual Assault with Amount of Time Women Lived in The United States (arrived in last 5 years versus. arrived in after 5 years) Approximately half the participants (49%, $n=58$) reported that they arrived in the United States within the last five years, and half reported having arrived more than five years earlier (49%, $n= 58$). In Table 4, the comparisons between sexual assault and length of residence in the United States were presented. The results of the chi-square

(shown in Table D) show no significant association between length of residence in the United States and sexual assault rate, $X^2 (1, N= 116) = 2.275, p = 0.132$.

Sexual Assault in Coercion involving Physical and/or Verbal Abuse from Owner

and Management versus Non-Coercion. In the data, nearly 50% ($n = 60$) of the participants indicated that they had experienced coercion from owners or management, while the remaining 48% ($n = 56$) reported no coercion from owners or management. The results are presented in Table 5. The relationship between coercion experience (physical and verbal abuse) and sexual assault rate was also found to be significant, $X^2 (1, N= 116) = 61.739, p = 0.000$.

Logistic Regression

To identify risk factors associated with sexual assault, logistic regression analyses of risk factors on all variables were conducted. The logistic regression analysis showed that ethnicity ($p = 0.979$) and type of sexual services ($p = 0.427$) were not predictive factors for sexual assault. However, both coercion experience from the massage parlor owner or management ($p < 0.001$) and length of residence in the United States ($p = 0.043$) were found to be predictive of sexual assault (Table 6).

Discussion

This current study examined the prevalence and correlation of sexual assault among Asian immigrant women in massage parlors. Over half of the sample (58.6%) reported an experience of sexual assault. In addition, we found that being coerced to engage in sexual activities, inability to choose customers, physical or verbal abuse from owner/management, and having resided in the United States less than five years were predictive of sexual assault. However, ethnicity and type of sexual services had no significant relationship to sexual assault. This contradicts our hypotheses

that women who are Chinese and provide non-penetrative sexual services are more likely to experience sexual assault.

Among the sixty-eight women who reported sexual assault, 85.2 % reported that the perpetrator was a customer. Some 14.7 percent, however, also reported sexual assault from others, including undercover police officers who were cracking down on the massage parlors and strangers such as robbers. Due to fear of deportation and disadvantage on their legal process, no participants reported these assaults to law enforcement agencies. These issues should be brought to the attention of law enforcement to prevent any further incidents.

As noted, Chinese massage parlors have been linked to gangs, human and sex trafficking, and organized crimes (Kanouse & Berry, 2005; Klausner, 1988; Richard, 1999). While some Korean massage parlors require licenses of workers, Chinese massage parlors typically do not request any license in order to work (Kanouse & Berry, 2005). However, ethnicity showed no relation to sexual assault in our sample. We did not find support for a relationship between massage parlor worker ethnicity and sexual assault, but other external factors such as Situational Crime Prevention (SCP) could be more likely related to sexual assault. Surveillance, police presence, lighting, and isolation of facility may influence the frequency of sexual assault. Further research should consider other external factors that may be related to sexual assault.

Previous research on type of sexual services in sex work venues highlighted that non-penetrative sexual service providers, like exotic dancers and escort service providers, reported being raped more than other sex service providers who typically provide penetrative sexual services (Church et al., 2001; Farley & Barkan, 1998; Raphael & Shapiro, 2004). This study, however, found no significant difference between type of sexual services (penetrative or non-

penetrative) and sexual assault. It is possible that the unique environment of massage parlors leads to sexual assault regardless of type of sexual services the women provide.

Massage parlor venues have a unique setting compared to other sex work venues. Participants often reported that the owners or managers are not present in the massage parlor, yet they monitor the venue with surveillance cameras. Once a session starts, there is only a female masseur and a customer in the closed room. Therefore, they have no support or system to protect themselves from risk of crime. Some reported that the owners and managements are watching the venue on video surveillance. However, it is possible that the owner and managements are turning a blind eye to assaults or not monitoring the cameras sufficiently. Furthermore, massage parlors usually operate using cash which may increase the likelihood of sexual assault and robbery. Some participants reported that robbers know that workers are afraid to report crimes to police because of their immigration status and language barrier. Therefore, robbers rape massage parlor workers as well some undercover cops. Considering our findings, these environmental factors could play an important role in the occurrence and prevention of sexual assault.

Participants who resided in the United States five years or fewer experienced higher rates of sexual assault than those who had been living here for more than five years. In the sample, a majority of women reported that they resided in the massage parlor venue and socialized with only their same ethnic group, which leads them to be isolated from local communities. This may lead to having limited accesses to resources such as seeking legal assistance and discourage them from seeking help, hence making them vulnerable to risks such as sexual assault. It is possible that challenges and difficulties that new immigrant women experience contribute to the likelihood of sexual assault.

Women who reported coercion from owners or management to provide sexual services or accept customers show a significantly higher rate of sexual assault. Fifty percent of participants reported that massage parlor owners or managers were coercive. Some indicated that they coerced women to take clients even though they do not want to. Threatening is considered one of the common coercive strategies among workers. This result supports the prior research that coercion from the owner or management is associated with a high rate of psychological distress and trauma (Dick & Nadin, 2011; Franz et al. 2010; Jackson et al. 2002; Lee et al., 2015; Salina, Ram, & Jason, 2016). Asian masseuses may be more vulnerable to sexual assault due to their cognitive rationalization of coercion and violence. This should be addressed by further research. Social service providers and public attention need to develop strategies specific to the heightened coercion faced by Asian immigrant massage parlor workers.

Among all factors examined in this study, coercion experience from owners or management and length of residence in the United States were considered independent risk factors for sexual assault among Asian immigrant women in massage parlors. These risk factors are related to the predominance of Asian populations in metropolitan areas - Los Angeles County and New York County - yet the lack of other ethnic groups. Therefore, the specific reasons need to be elucidated. Finally, our study's findings indicate that Asian immigrant women in massage parlors who experience coercion from owner or management and live in the United States for less than five years are more likely to experience sexual assault than women who do not report coercion and who have lived in the U.S. for more than five years.

Limitation and Further Research

Although the study used both qualitative and quantitative data to examine sexual assault in a hard to reach population, this study was not without limitations. Although the data is quite a

large sample, the small population size compared to the number of Asian immigrant women who provide sexual services in massage parlors may limit generalizability. It is hard to recruit a marginalized population because of the sensitive nature of the topic and disclosure of illegal activities. For further research, a larger number of participants in the sample will improve validity concerns about the statistical significance.

Among the Korean sample, some were Korean-Chinese but identified themselves as Korean. They grew up in China and had gone to Korea to receive a Korean passport to enter the United States. Some identified that they worked in Korea for years before they came to the states. Some identified that they stayed in Korea only a short amount of time before they came to the States. However, they all identified themselves as Korean, not Chinese. After they came to the States, they began working in either Chinese or Korean massage parlors. Although they identified themselves as Korean, their cultural background may be Chinese, not Korean. This could be a potential confounding variable.

Furthermore, this study only explores the victim's perspectives and considers the victim's variables. On balance, further research should aim to examine clients' perspectives and their perception toward Asian immigrant women in massage parlors and sexual assault to expand the perspective. The development of prevention initiatives may be guided by understanding the perpetrators' motivations.

Conclusion

This study demonstrated that Asian immigrant women who provide sexual services in massage parlors are at high risk of sexual assault and other crimes such as robbery. However, these women are reluctant to seek police protection due to fear of deportation, lack of legal status, and language barriers. Not only do owners and management take advantage of massage parlor workers,

but also customers also sexually abuse and steal from massage parlor workers. Furthermore, massage parlors' unique situational and environmental factors, including the use of cash, can expose workers to crime. These factors put these women in more vulnerable positions and contribute to the underground nature of massage parlors.

Despite the limitations of our study, this study challenges a new perspective of the relationship between sex workers and sexual assault. The results still suggest that there are risk factors for sexual assault among Asian immigrant women in massage parlors. Thus, the findings add nuance to the idea that sex workers and sexual assault are less likely related, and draw attention to the need to humanize sex workers and other marginalized populations.

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Appendix

Table 1.

Descriptive Statistics for Asian immigrant women in sexually oriented massage parlors

Characteristics of Asian immigrant massage parlor workers (2014 – 2016)				
Variable		New York City (n=62), Mean±SD, or frequency (%)	Los Angeles County (n=54), Mean±SD or frequency (%)	Total (n=116), Mean±SD or frequency (%)
Age (year)		46.76±9.2 6	43.75±9.8 3	45.35±9.6 9
Highest education level	Less than 8 years of schooling	4 (6.5)	11 (20.4)	15 (12.9)
	More than 8 years of schooling, but not a high school graduate or GED	5 (8.1)	6 (11.1)	11 (9.5)
	High school graduate/GED	31 (50.0)	16 (29.6)	47 (40.5)
	Some college	7 (11.3)	7 (13.0)	14 (12.1)
	Associate degree/2-year degree	11 (17.7)	9 (16.7)	20 (17.2)
	4-year college degree	3 (4.8)	5 (9.3)	8 (6.9)
	Graduate school and more	1 (1.6)	0 (0)	1 (0.9)
Primary language	Korean	27 (43.5)	20 (37.0)	47 (40.5)
	Mandarin	30 (48.4)	27 (50.0)	57 (49.1)
	Cantonese	3 (4.8)	2 (3.7)	5 (4.3)
	Taiwanese	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)
	Other	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)
	Missing Value	2 (3.2)	5 (9.3)	7 (6.0)
English level	Not at all	11 (17.7)	5 (9.3)	16 (13.8)
	Not well	38 (61.3)	36 (66.7)	74 (63.8)
	Well	9 (14.5)	11 (20.4)	20 (17.2)
	Very well	4 (6.5)	2 (3.7)	6 (5.2)
Current legal marital status	Married, living with spouse	4 (6.5)	11 (20.4)	15 (12.9)
	Married, not living with spouse	14 (22.6)	2 (3.7)	16 (13.8)
	Widowed	4 (6.5)	0 (0)	4 (3.4)
	Divorced	20 (32.3)	23 (42.6)	43 (37.1)

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	Separated	4 (6.5)	2 (3.7)	6 (5.2)
	Never married (single)	15 (24.2)	15 (27.8)	30 (25.9)
	Registered domestic partners	1 (1.6)	0 (0)	1 (0.9)
	Missing Value	0 (0)	1 (1.9)	1 (0.9)
Do you have children?	Yes	47 (75.8)	33 (61.1)	80 (69.0)
	No	13 (21.0)	20 (37.0)	33 (28.4)
	Missing Value	2 (3.2)	1 (1.9)	3 (2.6)
Do your children live with you now?	Yes	10 (16.1)	14 (25.9)	24 (20.7)
	No	36 (58.1)	18 (33.3)	54 (46.6)
	Does Not Have Children	13 (21.0)	20 (37.0)	33 (28.4)
	Missing Value	3 (4.8)	2 (3.7)	5 (4.3)

Note: the sum of percentages may exceed or fall short of 100.0 because of rounding.

Table 2.
Sexual assault in Chinese women versus Korean women

	Ethnicity		Total	χ^2
	Chinese	Korean		
Sexual Assault	23	25	48	0.101
Non- Sexual Assault	43	25	68	
Total	66	50	116	

* $p < .05$.

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Table 3.
Sexual assault in type of sexual service

	Type of Sexual Service		Total	χ^2
	Penetrative Sexual Service	Non-penetrative Sexual Service		
Sexual Assault	21	27	48	0.845
Non- Sexual Assault	31	37	68	
Total	52	64	116	

* $p < .05$.

Table 4.
Sexual assault in amount of time women lived in the United States

	Time		Total	χ^2
	Arrived in last 5 years	Arrived in after 5 years		
Sexual Assault	28	20	48	0.132
Non- Sexual Assault	30	38	68	
Total	58	58	116	

* $p < .05$.

Table 5.
Sexual assault in coercion from owner/management versus. non-coercion

	Coercion		Total	χ^2
	Coercion from owner/management	No Coercion		
Sexual Assault	44	4	48	0.000
Non- Sexual Assault	12	56	68	
Total	56	60	116	

* $p < .05$.

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Table 6.
Logistic regression

	B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)
Ethnicity	-.015	.577	.001	1	.979	.985
Type of Sexual Service	.480	.604	.632	1	.427	1.616
Time	1.284	.636	4.079	1	.043	3.611
Coercion	4.320	.701	37.932	1	.000	75.210
Constant	-2.369	.777	9.289	1	.002	.094

* p < .05.