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Chapter 4

Contesting the Model Minority and Perpetual Foreigner Stereotypes: A Critical Review of Literature on Asian Americans in Education

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Student: "Asians are threatening our economic future . . . We can see it right here in our own school. Who are getting into the best colleges, in disproportionate numbers? Asian kids! It's not fair."

Teacher: "Uh . . . That certainly was an unusual essay . . . Unfortunately, it's racist."

Student: "Um . . . are you sure? My parents helped me."

—Garry Trudeau, *Doonesbury*, March 17, 1988, cited in Wu (2002, p. 39)

The Asian American¹ presence in schools, as captured by cartoonist Garry Trudeau here, has a compelling grasp on the public imagination. Scholars (Dong, 1995; Wu, 2002) have utilized the pointed cartoon strip to emphasize the criticality of understanding how insidious and pervasive is the myth of Asian Americans as model minorities, especially in education. The Asian American model minority image is alluring yet troubling. On one hand, the supposed academic achievement of Asian Americans is used as a beacon to highlight the prototypical American success story, a group to be admired and emulated by others. At the same time, however, it is used to produce a heightened sense of fear, particularly in schools, where the Asian "horde" will take over the classrooms to raise test scores and ruin the grading curve, resulting in a new form of "White flight" (Hwang, 2005). These concerns exist at the K–12 level as well as in the realm of higher education admissions, as captured by Trudeau. In either case, one thing remains clear: Asian Americans are cast outside the peripheries of normalcy.

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An understanding of how racial meanings have been constructed about Asian Americans, or how they have been racialized (Omi & Winant, 1994), requires a departure from a Black/White racial binary. Legal scholar Ancheta (2000) considers how anti-Asian discrimination is distinctly different from anti-Black subordination. He writes, "The racialization of Asian Americans has taken on two primary forms: racialization as non-Americans and racialization as the model minority" (p. 44). This outsider racialization constructs Asian Americans as foreign-born outsiders. In the realm of education, this construction extends to the view of Asian Americans as "forever foreigners" (Tuan, 1998), where the permanency of equal status as citizens cannot be fully realized.

Asian American racialization as both the model minority and the foreigner exists within larger racial discourses. C. Kim (1999) posits a theory of "a field of racial positions" that considers how Asian Americans have been racialized relative to Whites and Blacks and how racialization is more complex than a hierarchy with Whites on top, Blacks on the bottom, and other groups in between (p. 106). Kim's field of racial positions involves at least two axes (superior/inferior and insider/foreigner), which acknowledges the different ways that groups are racialized. Asian Americans are "racially triangulated" vis-à-vis Whites and Blacks through two interrelated processes of "relative valorization" (Whites valorizing Asian Americans relative to Blacks) and the process of "civic ostracism" (Whites constructing Asian Americans as foreign and Other, p. 107).

The model minority and foreigner images emerge in research on Asian Americans in K-12 schooling (Lei, 1998) and higher education (S. S. Lee, 2006; Suzuki, 2002). Both Lei and S. S. Lee discuss how these representations play off each other and are interconnected, placing Asian Americans in a vulnerable racial position, ostracized from both the White majority and causing racial tensions with other minorities (primarily African Americans). Placed within the confines of the Black/White discourse, Asian Americans have been inexactly situated in comparison to Whites and Blacks rather than understood as racialized in distinct ways. The representations of Asian American students as models and foreigners also uphold the racial status quo, which marginalizes students of color (Jo, 2004; S. J. Lee, 2006; Lei, 1998).

Although researchers have uncovered the more complex ways that Asian Americans are racialized, Asian Americans continue to be cast as interlopers in a Black/White racial discourse; being neither Black nor White, Asian Americans rarely gain visibility and voice as racial minorities. Scholars in the fields of history (Takaki, 1998), English (Lowe, 2000), anthropology (Manalansan, 2000, 2003), sociology (Kibria, 2002; C. Kim, 1999; Min, 1996; Tuan, 1998), ethnic and gender studies (Espiritu, 1997; R. Lee, 1999), and law (Ancheta, 2000; Wu, 1995) have critically examined the complexities of Asian American experiences and challenged the ways that the public has falsely imagined them. The field of education, however, has lagged behind these theoretical advances. There is great foundational knowledge to be gleaned from other disciplines in addressing the educational concerns and needs of Asian American students.

The specter of Asians and Asian Americans as the yellow peril and the model minority has a long history. First invoked during the 19th century to create comparative labor advantage between and among the railroad barons to yield high profit through the cheapest labor force, Chinese workers were typically fashioned as the model against which other immigrant groups, such as the Irish, should aspire (Takaki, 1998; Wu, 1995). When the Chinese Exclusion law of 1882—stemming from the fear of the “Yellow Peril,” as popularized by novelist Jack London—curtailed further migration of Chinese, attention started to shift to the growing population of Japanese immigrants along the West Coast (Daniels, 1988). Again, although seemingly admired for their ability to cultivate difficult arid lands, they were then shunned and despised for their success in agriculture. At the outbreak of World War II, Japanese immigrants and Americans were incarcerated for fear of disloyalty and espionage.

In the 1960s, during the Civil Rights movement, the image of Asian Americans seemed to improve, in relation to African Americans and other racial minority groups who sought equal rights and protection under the law; at this time, newspaper headlines hailed Chinese and Japanese Americans as the model minority. Popular magazines such as *Time* and *Newsweek* highlighted their Confucian-style “rugged individualism”; Asians did not need government support to make it in U.S. society. As numerous Asian Americanists have noted throughout the years (Cheng & Yang, 2000; Osajima, 2000), the purposeful ways in which Asians were heralded for their success was a direct attack against African Americans in their outspoken quest for equality in the 1960s and against a critique of institutional and structural racism. Such pernicious and unfounded comparisons between the races only served to create fissures that continue to exist today and support a message of individual effort as a primary means to overcome racism, erasing the existence of structural barriers.

Contemporary characterizations of Asian Americans reveal the persistence of the foreigner and model minority stereotypes in mainstream culture and more educated, professional communities. In 2002, for example, the popular young adult clothing company Abercrombie & Fitch launched a line of T-shirts intended to add humor and levity to its fashion that featured slant-eyed, Asian characters pulling rickshaws and working in laundromats (Gliona & Goldman, 2002). Notions of Asian American foreignness also are evident in educational discussions. In his 1999 *Phi Delta Kappan* essay titled “The Demise of the Asian Math Gene,” for example, Gerald Bracey speculated on the role of Confucian ideals behind Asian American educational success as well as the impact of poorer, rural, and less literate homeland factors resulting in Asian American juvenile delinquency. Even more recently, Bracey (2005) wrote about the “spelling gene” that children of Indian ancestry must possess, helping them win five of the last seven Scripps National Spelling Bees. Bracey (citing Joseph Berger from *The New York Times*) explained that preparing for spelling bees is especially compatible with the “rote learning methods of their homeland” where people “do not regard champion spellers as nerds” (p. 92). However, concluding that Indian parents may be even more single-minded than American parents

who want their children to succeed in extracurricular endeavors, Bracey stated, "I couldn't help thinking of those years of mono-maniacally obsessive preparation as a form of child abuse" (p. 92). These representations reinforce ideas that Asian Americans are culturally (and even genetically) distinct from the rest of America and that their narrow focus on achievement is not completely praiseworthy.

Theories about Asian "Otherness" can be applied to educational discussions. Cultural theorist Said's (1978) influential work on the theory of Orientalism also provides ample thought for how the Occident has imagined the place of the Orient as a means for dominance and control, including the means of representation as reified into the daily structures of institutions such as education. Indeed, the power of the Western gaze to focus on its cultural superiority over others has led to the continued belief and resultant policies maintaining the status quo. As Rizvi and Lingard (2006) write,

Orientalism is best understood as a system of representations, a discourse framed by political forces through which the West sought to understand and control its colonized populations. It is a discourse that both assumes and promotes a fundamental difference between the Western "us" and Oriental "them." It is a manner of regularized interpreting, writing about and accounting for the Orient, dominated by imperatives, perspectives, and ideological biases politically marshaled to self-justify imperial conquests and exploitation. In this sense, the Orient is an imagined place that is articulated through as an entire system of thought and scholarship. (p. 296)

As Rizvi and Lingard (2006) note, the influence of Said to education and educational policies comes from one's perceived notions of how the Other lives. In this example, and through our years of teaching experiences, we find that a number of educators still come to the classroom with a priori assumptions about the profound foreignness of their Asian American students. It is that sense of profound cultural difference that underlies the model minority stereotype as well.

One dangerous strain in educational research that perpetuates the construction of Asian Americans as profoundly different relates to explanations for their academic success. All too often, cultural explanations are offered. For example, our initial perusal of research related to Asian American students revealed a troubling tendency to rely on particular cultural characteristics, such as the Confucian norms, to primarily account for the academic achievement of Asian Americans (Pearce, 2006; Zhou, 2000). The tenor of these conclusions presumes Asian American educational achievement, when in fact these studies do not acknowledge Asian Americans' bimodal performance, which includes students performing below the norm (Hune & Chan, 1997). Pang, Kiang, and Pak (2004) have indicated the great diversity of ethnicities that constitute Asian Pacific Americans (APA) and assert that creating monolithic truths based on two or three high-achieving ethnicities does a disservice to everyone. Yet the continued emphasis on educational research that presumes and highlights the academic achievement of Asian Americans creates a wedge between other racial minority groups. Coupled with this, Asian American success discourse is a presumption of African American and Latino academic underachievement. Critical

historians (Anderson, 1998, 2004a, 2004b; Span & Anderson, 2005; Williams, 2005) have provided ample evidence for the persistence of educational attainment by African Americans since the time of slavery to counter current misconceptions and cultural deficit models in which African Americans do not value education. Yet the implicit and sometimes explicit academic comparisons between the high-achieving Asians with the low-achieving African Americans persists and only serves to maintain White privilege. This binary erases the experiences of Asian Americans who do not achieve and also the experiences of African Americans, Latinas/Latinos, and Native Americans who do achieve. As aptly phrased by S. J. Lee (1996), the model minority stereotype is a hegemonic device to desensitize the public about the deep and troubling history of race relations in the United States; schools and educators become implicated in the process.

Our discussion here is not to deny or ignore the population of high-achieving Asian American students per se, but basing conclusions on specific Asian cultural practices and beliefs limits our understanding of how particular racialized groups in the United States adopt certain adaptive strategies to deal with racism and how education is seen as one of the few means to gain social capital. Members of a racialized group can come to internalize the myths about cultural difference themselves without examining the larger structural formations of how racism is lived in the everyday (see, e.g., Abboud & Kim, 2005). The structural barriers that have been placed to impede larger-scale achievement among all students, therefore, require further investigation.

There are several aims of this literature review. At its basic level, our goal is to provide readers with content knowledge of the educational research on Asian Americans, highlighting important findings and key studies in the field. The educational literature on Asian Americans is a growing field; it is our goal to identify themes and trends and look to important future directions as a whole, specifically examining the collective effect of a wide range of studies rather than focusing on a singular work or narrow subfield. Through the review, our second goal is to reveal the severely limited representations of Asian Americans as model minorities and cultural foreigners in educational research. The educational community needs to critically assess these representations and understand the deleterious impact they have on Asian American students and faculty/teachers. Our third goal is to examine new directions of research that show the complexity of Asian American identities and experiences, which cannot be simply reduced to individual merit or cultural value alone. As Lowe (2000) points out, Asian Americans are a heterogeneous and hybrid group who defy easy categorization. By employing intersectional approaches, this research refuses to reduce Asian Americans to simplistic caricatures but shows how the myriad factors of ethnicity, language, gender, culture, socioeconomic status, sexuality, and the like affect Asian American experiences. At the same time, we recognize that although we seek to contest racialized representations, they continue to be highly salient in our society—we cannot easily dismiss them as mere ideological fabrications. Our final goal is thus to listen to the voices of Asian American students and teachers as they

themselves struggle to make sense of racialized expectations and messages and negotiate their own experiences. Because racism persists toward Asian Americans and is evident in simplistic notions, we embrace an antiracist approach. As Osajima (1995a) articulates, although postmodern interpretations offer a lens through which to appreciate the rich complexity of Asian Americans, they do not adequately address the necessity of political unity to challenge anti-Asian racism. Thus, our analysis is one that does not abandon the concepts of race and racism but seeks to center Asian American voices and experiences in negotiation and resistance to these structures.

This article also provides a cautionary note for educational researchers interested in pursuing research on Asian Americans. History shows there are sometimes pitfalls to researching this population.² During the early 20th century, sociologist Robert Park spearheaded academic research on Asian immigrants and Asian Americans, work that fueled scholars' obsessions with Oriental success, driving a subsequent generation of researchers to embark on a path to uncover explanations for the phenomenon rather than asking if the phenomenon actually existed (H. Yu, 2001). Showcasing Oriental success also was reflected in intercultural education school curricula in the 1930s and 1940s (Pak, in press). In a similar vein, there also exists a tendency to treat the unsuccessful Asian American groups as so profoundly different, from a cultural standpoint, that no clear means of acculturation can exist (see, e.g., Faderman 1999; Fadiman, 1998; Walker-Moffat, 1995). They can only exist as foreigners who need intermediaries, presumably the well-meaning, White (female), middle-class researcher, to gain legitimacy (Depouw, 2006). This critique is not intended to solely implicate or denigrate research performed by White researchers about non-White subjects but to point out that we all need to maintain reflexive practices about how our own positionality inserts itself in what we do.

ASIAN AMERICANS IN K–12 RESEARCH

Understanding Asian American Experiences Through the Lens of Cultural Difference

A great deal of the educational literature on Asian Americans discusses their experiences and needs through the lens of “cultural difference” (Sleeter & Grant, 2003). As Lei (2006) explains, one strength of this approach is that it provides educators with a body of literature from which to develop an understanding of Asian Americans. By discussing Asian Americans as members of distinct and stable cultural groups, such research provides factual descriptions and concrete recommendations in various regards.

Sometimes, Asian Americans are cast pan-ethnically, and other times, focus is given to particular ethnic or regional groups. For example, each chapter in the book *Asian American Education: Prospects and Challenges* (Park & Chi, 1999) features the detailed immigration, sociocultural, and linguistic experiences of an ethnic group to “provide a sense of how each group is faring,” illuminate the “unique educational issues, needs, and challenges faced by the group,” and provide “practical and insightful suggestions”

for teachers and others working with Asian American students (p. viii). More concise summaries of different behaviors and values also can be found in literature reviews such as that of Mathews (2000), who describes the cultural patterns of South and Southeast Asians with respect to family relationships, respect for age, social interaction, communication style, family expectations of success, humility, school situations, decision making, and socialization barriers, as well as their accompanying implications for teaching (see also Adler, 1998, on Japanese Americans). Suggestions for working with Asian parents and families also have been compiled, encouraging teachers to show respect for immediate and extended family members, provide opportunities to share differences in U.S. and Asian schools and society, and consider Asian parents' English proficiency (e.g., G. Lee & Manning, 2001a, 2001b). Scholars also have offered their recommendations for instructional strategies and curriculum best suited for Asian American children (Chiang, 2000).

However, although this literature provides educators with straightforward and quick overviews about various aspects of working with Asian Americans, it tends to treat the group monolithically and is thereby unable to get at the more complicated realities of Asian American identities and experiences. Some authors express their awareness of this tendency by providing the following caveat:

Prototypic Asian American parents and families do not exist. Just as all parents and families differ, Asian American parents differ by educational backgrounds, linguistic ability, socioeconomic status, acculturation, and demographic region, just to name representative examples. Educators need to be wary when referring to "Asian American" parents and families. (G. Lee & Manning, 2001b, p. 23)

Yet the essentializing effect of such an approach is difficult to balance, perpetuating stereotypes about Asian American foreignness and endorsing the goal of assimilation (Lei, 2006). The working premise of many of the studies reviewed is to attend to the needs of relatively recent Asian immigrant students (Park & Chi, 1999). The idea that Asian Americans belong to stable and distinct cultures leads to conclusions such as, "Obedience, silence, and nonassertiveness are *normal* traits for most South Asian and Southeast Asian school children," "they do not *normally* initiate conversation, and they are comfortable with silence," and "behaviors such as timidity, overdependence, and lack of initiative can be manifestations of the *cultural* traits of students from South Asian and Southeast Asian families" (Mathews, 2000, pp. 103–104, italics added).

Paradoxically, the cultural distinctiveness of Asian Americans has served as an explanation for both their notable educational success as well as for their increasing rates of juvenile delinquency. On one hand, researchers have sought to identify the positive cultural components leading to Chinese American students' high educational achievement to develop programs that could prompt similar cultural shifts in individual students from other racial/ethnic backgrounds. Pearce (2006) argues, "By gaining a better understanding of the factors that aid some Chinese Americans in realizing academic success, we can identify methods for ameliorating the situation

among underachieving groups” (p. 76). On the other hand, a growing body of literature examines how the notion of profound cultural difference contributes to the “ideological Blackening” (Ong, 1996) of Southeast Asians. In particular, this characterization supports an image of Southeast Asians who do not culturally value education, grouping them in the same racialized categories as African Americans (Depouw, 2006; S. J. Lee, 2006).

New Conceptualizations: Intersections and Negotiations

As Coloma (2006) notes, a different paradigm of educational research on Asian Americans takes an intersectional approach, examining the ways in which race intersects with other identities such as sexuality, gender, and class. Coloma notes that this approach is innovative because by revealing the complexities of people’s actual experiences, it avoids overgeneralizations and essentialist interpretations. Educational research on Asian American experiences revealing the complex interplay of various factors highlights real experiences and gives voice to Asian American students as they negotiate externally imposed racial expectations.

Innovative research showing the complexities of Asian American experiences takes this approach. For example, examining Asian American identity formation as a dynamic process shaped by intergroup relations illustrates the complexity of the classification, especially because identity is a developmental concept reflecting an individual’s sense of self derived from a feeling of belonging or commitment to one’s own group as well as an acculturative concept indicating the way an individual relates to other groups and society at large (Shrake & Rhee, 2004). S. J. Lee’s (1996) study of Academic High provides a rich example of the varied identifications Asian American students constructed as they sought to make sense of their position in the racial minefield in their school. Korean-identified students who socialized primarily with other Korean-identified students tried to befriend White students and adopt American behaviors for status and avoided contact with African American students; Asian-identified students who adhered firmly to a belief in fairness and meritocracy admired but remained socially distant from White students and rationalized their experiences with racism as temporary difficulties; new wavers who adopted an oppositional stance to school engaged the racially charged exchange of insults with African American students who were tracked in the same classes and lived in the same neighborhoods as they did while incorporating some designators of street culture; and Asian American-identified students who challenged the supposed superiority of Whites questioned the truthfulness of the model minority stereotype and sought alliances with students of other racial groups. Considering the meaningfulness that Asian American students attach to different reference subgroups thus generates insight into the many dimensions of the identifier (see also S. J. Lee, 2001, 2005).

The tendency to essentialize Asian Americans also can be countered by disaggregating data, and researchers such as Baker, Keller-Wolff, and Wolf-Wendel (2000) have found that such practices add explanatory value to statistical models. While

recognizing the constraints of available large-scale data sets and the need to maintain subgroup sample sizes, Baker et al. used the 1998 National Educational Longitudinal Study (NELS) data to assess the extent to which commonly used racial/ethnic classifications appropriately represented their constituent subgroups with respect to academic achievement. They concluded that some subgroups may not be accurately represented by their common aggregate classification. For example, the high mathematics achievement of Asian Americans overall was problematized when disaggregation indicated that there was a range in outcomes from Pacific Islanders who performed 6.83 points below White students to West Asian students who performed 8.45 points above White students (p. 524). Not only was the variation in outcomes among subgroups wide, but the inclusion of West Asian individuals from Iranian, Afghan, and Turkish backgrounds under the rubric “Asian” in this data set reveals problems with conceptualizing Asian American educational experiences. West Asian students’ experiences are arguably quite distinct from Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Filipino, and Indian students, for example, who have a shared history of being racialized as non-White.³

The intersectionally nuanced experiences of particular ethnic groups also have been captured in qualitative studies. Through observations and interviews, Goto (1997) situates the seemingly inconsistent and contradictory social and academic behavior of Chinese American high school students in a web of peer relationships, including “nerds,” “normal people,” and “homeboys.” Rather than endure the racialized stereotype of being nerds singularly focused on their academic achievement, these students positioned themselves strategically so as not to be too popular or too high performing and remain comfortably anonymous. In this way, students in Goto’s study lived up to their expressed preference for maintaining harmonious friendships with others rather than foster relationships characterized by individual competition and status. Goto (1997) concludes, “Asian students, particularly adolescents, may be more concerned about a localized form of mobility—the ability to move about between different peer groups, reinforcing friendships and not making enemies” (p. 82).

Identity goes beyond ethnicity. Baker et al. (2000) also recommend considering students’ varying English language proficiency, socioeconomic status, and generational status. S. J. Lee (2006) reiterates this point, arguing that the various identities and intersections of identities that shape Asian American experiences include not only social class, ethnicity, and generation but also gender. Some of the most insightful contemporary research adopts such an integrated perspective.

Lew’s (2004) work examines the relationship between ethnicity and class and documents the effects of limited social capital and weak ethnic ties on working-class Korean students’ decisions to drop out of high school. Respondents in her study reported feeling isolated and ill-equipped to make decisions about their academic futures because their parents worked long hours and were unable to provide them with the firsthand guidance necessary to do well in school. Furthermore, they attended underresourced schools where their teachers and counselors provided minimal and

sometimes inaccurate advice. By internalizing feelings of their low status, Lew found that these students negotiated their racial and ethnic identities differently than other Asian American students who maintained strong ethnic community connections or had wealth. Instead, most Korean dropouts in Lew's study developed oppositional perspectives and "aligned their shared experiences of racism and low socio-economic status with other low-income minority peers—Blacks, Hispanics, and Asians" (Lew, 2004, p. 318).

Louie (2001) found similar effects in her study of Chinese immigrant parents' expectations, strategies, and investments in their children's education. Whether middle or low income, the parents in Louie's study reported emphasizing the value of education not only because of their traditional cultural values but because of the availability of postsecondary education in the United States compared to their respective countries of origin, potential monetary returns for a college degree in the American labor market, and as a form of protection against the effects of perceived racial discrimination. However, middle-class Chinese parents whose livelihood was derived through their participation in the mainstream economy secured information about different educational options from their friends, teachers, and other school administrators. As a result, they were able to enroll their children in private schools, secure financial aid if necessary, or even move to neighborhoods with reportedly excellent schools. In contrast, the low-income Chinese parents in Louie's study worked primarily within the more limited ethnic economy of restaurants and garment factories and therefore relied on informal ethnic networks to learn about school reputations and specialized entrance examinations. Typically, these informants were also immigrants who had resided in the United States longer and were economically more secure.

Although advances are being made in educational scholarship, thorough consideration of issues related to the intersection of race, gender, and sexuality are still relatively scant. For example, Lei (2003) documents how the identities of Southeast Asian male students were constructed at Hope High School through racialized and gendered regulatory discourses and normative representations. Because these students were often quiet, teachers viewed them variously as model students, secretive, gang-like, and clannish. Compared to the masculine ideal of White, European American men, these students were viewed as small and weak. As a result, students typically socialized in groups with other Southeast Asian young men who could provide them with protection from harassment if needed, and they all appeared tough to outside observers because they had adopted markers of urban, hip-hop culture. The result, as Lei (2003) points out, is that

By being in a group, the Southeast Asian American males created a defense barrier that protected them from potential harassment. The same barrier, however, served to maintain a lack of communication and understanding between the Southeast Asian American male students and the rest of the school. (p. 176)

In describing her earlier study, S. J. Lee (2006) also found that "the messages (boys) receive from school, popular culture, and the larger society is that they are too short,

too quiet, and too Asian. In short, they learn that they lack the qualities associated with hegemonic masculinity” (p. 24). Researchers such as Shrake and Rhee (2004) explain, however, that Asian American adolescent girls may become quickly assimilated into a more egalitarian American culture and society, thereby heightening the tensions between familial and societal expectations and leading to psychologically internalized distress such as depression or anxiety. The extent of Asian American students’ acculturation also seems to be related to their level of personal self-esteem (Rhee, Chang, & Rhee, 2003). These issues warrant further consideration because they affect not only Asian American students’ self-concept but also shape significant social and familial interactions.

Asian American Families: Embodying the Complexities of Experience

Representations of Asian Americans as the model minority and foreigner support a simplistic discourse of the Asian family as a hub of distinct and positive cultural values that embrace education, hard work, and family cohesion. However, a more in-depth analysis is needed to understand how culture is shaped and contested. The issue of a culture gap does arise within Asian families, particularly in the form of intergenerational conflict between immigrant parents and U.S.-born children; often, immigrant parents dichotomize Asian culture with American culture and interpret their children’s behaviors as a rejection of their family traditions. Second- and later-generation Asian American children therefore struggle to define their own culture, and their experiences of living in the United States are often affected by the reality of anti-Asian racism. Research on Asian American families reveals the complexities and conflicts that can arise as culture is contested and constantly recreated.

Cultural differences within an immigrant family can result in tension. For instance, the student respondents in Louie’s (2001) study from working-class families reported that their parents utilized more authoritarian styles of interaction, which they believe fostered ineffective communication. Qin (2006) further explored the parent-child relations of two Chinese immigrant families, one from the middle class and one from the working class. Although the family relationships differed according to how much time parents were able to spend with their children instead of working outside the home and the quality of direct assistance given to support their children’s educations, the children ultimately became alienated from their parents in both cases. Qin (2006) attributes this estrangement to “dissonant acculturation” whereby,

Parents tend to compare their children’s behaviors with those of children in China or their own experiences growing up, immigrant children increasingly compare their parents with the American parents they see in movies or parents of their friends, who emphasize more communication and freedom, and less control in their relationship with children. (p. 173)

Qin found parent-child alienation to be more acute during adolescence and the financial demands placed on the low-income parents further exacerbated the problem.

S. J. Lee's (2001) study of Hmong American high school students provides additional detail about the ensuing difficulties involved in bridging cultural gaps between parents and their children. She examines one and a half-generation students (those born abroad and in the United States for 3 to 8 years) and second-generation (U.S.-born) students. By retaining more of the "traditional Hmong values" (those that parents and teachers defined as putting high importance on education and family obligations), teachers and parents both perceived one and a half-generation children to be model students. This view stemmed from the parental belief that Hmong culture provided children with a type of protection against becoming too Americanized and reinforced the belief that "[a] good kid will go back to the culture." These one and a half-generation children remained relatively isolated from other children in the school, and because they were able to compare their experiences of discrimination in the United States with the difficulties they endured in their native country, they were more willing to overlook instances of racism and focus on the positive aspects of living in the United States. American-born, second-generation Hmong students in S. J. Lee's study, however, were seen as bad kids because they wore baggy clothes resembling gang attire, insisted on exercising their independence from authority, and rebelled against their parents' strict rules forbidding dating. In these instances, parents lamented what they saw as the loss of their children to American ways. Conversely, the children expressed skepticism with the idea that education would lead to upward social mobility because they saw discrimination as a persistent feature of living in the United States. These children struggled to make sense of their experiences amid competing cultural messages and racialized realities.

Other studies examining ethnicity and generational status have found that language loss and language differences between Asian immigrant parents and their children may have significant negative effects on family relations and other aspects of children's health and social development because language is a measure of acculturation. Using data from the 1997–1998 World Health Organization Study of Health Behavior in School Children, S. M. Yu, Huang, and Schwalberg (2002) documented an association between students who did not speak English at home and higher health risks, such as not wearing seat belts, higher psychosocial risks such as feeling marginalized at school and experiencing difficulty making new friends, and higher parental risks such as feeling unsupported when trying to deal with school and personal problems (pp. 193–194). These adolescents also reported more frequent incidents of illness, including dizziness, headaches, and stomachaches.

The process of language loss typically occurs in three generations or less, resulting in children who have little or no working knowledge of their parents' and grandparents' native language and cultural traditions. Researchers have attributed this phenomenon to the assimilative pressures of culturally and linguistically dominant groups over others as well as perceptions of linguistic inferiority internalized by minority individuals and affecting their social identity. Given the adverse direct and indirect effects of language loss described above and denigration of bilingual and bicultural identities, it is important to consider possible strategies for fostering

language resilience among native biliterate Asian American youth. Tse (2001) argues that “schools alone have limited ability to revitalize threatened languages” because resisting the process requires broader involvement with peer groups that use the heritage language, institutions that value the language, and parents who speak the language and encourage its use. Reinforcing the vitality of a language—its status and prestige as shaped by various social, political, cultural, and psychological influences—and involvement in rich literacy environments and experiences is essential.

Asian American Teachers and Teachers of Asian American Students

Asian Americans are clearly underrepresented in the teaching profession, constituting only 1% to 1.2% of all K–12 teachers across the country, with an average enrollment of eight preservice teachers each in certification programs across the country (Gordon, 2000). These numbers are disproportionate to the participation of Asian Americans in higher education as well as the workforce at large and are perhaps best explained by immigration status and selective career planning (Rong & Preissle, 1997). Existing research provides several explanations for why Asian Americans are reluctant to become teachers, including the negotiation of racial barriers and messages of racial expectations.

Based on student-led interviews with members of the Asian American community, Gordon (2000) offers four main reasons for their low interest in teaching. First, respondents cited the spoken and unspoken pressures they felt from their parents, family, and community to secure positions of high status and income. Because of culturally internalized values such as deference toward elders and maintaining family harmony, these respondents felt obliged to enter occupations in medicine or engineering that would “enhance the image of [their] family” (p. 184). Second, regardless of their ethnic origins, all of Gordon’s respondents identified with traditional Chinese views on the significance of education and the near perfection necessary in those individuals who aspired to become teachers. Respondents feared the responsibility and potential incompetence they might experience in educating someone else’s child, rendering them “discouraged before they [tried]” (p. 186). Third, respondents voiced concerns about having to work outside their comfort zones with students whose backgrounds were unfamiliar, maintain classroom discipline and order, and perhaps be ridiculed for their lack of English proficiency. They also worried about having to share their personal opinions and experiences publicly. Last, because the respondents saw little value in matching Asian American children with Asian American teachers, they did not feel compelled to enter the teaching profession. In fact, respondents expressed their specific desire to be accepted as “normal” and “feared that Asian teachers would reach out to Asian students in a different way, thereby stigmatizing, isolating, or favoring those students” (p. 190).

Gordon’s (2000) study and related work (Gordon, 1997, 2005; also see Asher, 2002, on the cultural influences shaping Indian American students’ career choices) provide numerous cultural insights into why Asian Americans may avoid becoming

teachers, but their research is based primarily on first- or second-generation Asian immigrants whose retention of their traditional values is still strong and readily compare their American educational experiences and notions of success to those “in their home countries” (Gordon, 2000, p. 176). Other researchers have emphasized the more complex economic, demographic, political, sociocultural, psychological, and educational factors contributing to the shortage of Asian American teachers. Rong and Preissle (1997) point out that ethnic-enclave professions that many Asian Americans enter, such as engineering, computer science, medicine, and the hard sciences, help them not only limit social interaction with others to “save face” against cultural awkwardness but provide spaces where they can be judged more meritocratically on their mastery of objective skills and shield themselves from racial discrimination. Rong and Preissle (1997) further note that Asian American teachers view their experiences as different from other teachers with respect to parents’ expectations, teacher-student relationships, and teachers’ expectations of students. Asian American teachers “believed that they [were] a marginal minority, invisible in school, and that the school curriculum [was] irrelevant to Asian American life experiences and to their culture” (pp. 282–283).

Regardless of whether there is inherent value in race-matched teaching, Asian American teachers represent part of the growing diversity in the United States and have a role in modeling democratic free thinking and increasing both students’ and teachers’ knowledge and positive interaction among different cultural groups (Jorgenson, 2000). Given the heterogeneity within the community, Asian American teachers also may be especially able to identify with the needs and concerns of Asian American children, and their bicultural perspectives are a significant asset. More scholarship that considers the complexities of Asian American identity and career choice is needed. For example, Tang’s (2002) study comparing Asian American, Chinese, and Caucasian American college students’ career choices found that acculturation was a significant factor in career selection. Chinese respondents were most likely to enter occupations based on family expectations, and Caucasian American students were most likely to enter occupations based on their individual desires. Asian American respondents tended to fall in between these two groups, varying according to the extent of their acculturation. This finding is interesting, especially in light of Rong and Preissle’s (1997) point that most minority teachers are native born.

The invisibility of Asian Americans across key aspects of public education such as curriculum and staffing is problematic because it fosters the neglect of Asian American students’ complex identities, experiences, and educational needs. It also perpetuates their marginality within traditional discussions of race premised on a Black/White framework of society. Kiang (2004) notes that K–12 curriculum lacks significant content on Asia. Exacerbating this situation is high-stakes testing that has officially defined the curriculum students that should learn and excluded content about Asian Americans. These omissions affect all students and can reinforce Asian American stereotypes. S. J. Lee and Kumashiro (2005) note,

All students pick up social messages from what is included and what is excluded from the curriculum. Both AAPI and non-AAPI students are affected when issues related to AAPI history and culture are not taught in our schools. When Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) histories are not taught as part of U.S. history the implicit message is that AAPIs are not real Americans, thereby contributing to the stereotype that AAPIs are perpetual foreigners. (pp. 15–16)

According to Kiang (2004), Asian American studies (AAS) programs in higher education are significant—albeit underutilized—educational, cultural, and institutional assets that can contribute meaningfully in efforts to address these issues through a minimum of six interventions at the K–12 level: to assist in the development of curriculum, to raise awareness through teacher professional development, to facilitate classroom research and advocacy, to examine the long-term effects of AAS on teachers, to support the involvement of Asian American parents and families, and to mentor Asian American youth in school and community settings.

The impact of multicultural education in teacher preparation programs also must be considered because most teachers are White and have limited prior experience with Asian American children whose numbers have doubled to represent 4.2% of the total current student population (Goodwin, 2002). Whereas certain multicultural approaches can reinforce teachers' beliefs about distinct group differences or merely focus on the feel-good outcomes of human relations, other approaches can foster deeper knowledge about the historical and contemporary experiences of a racial/ethnic group, promote the individual and collective diversity that exists in society, and critically examine and transform existing systems of inequality and discrimination (Sleeter & Grant, 2003). An essential first step is that teachers must be trained to recognize the presence and range of experiences had by Asian American children in schools. In reviewing teacher education textbooks, Goodwin (2002) found that terms such as "children of color," "diverse children," "culturally and linguistically diverse students," and "minority children" tended to be used interchangeably with "immigrant children." This conflation of terminology makes it difficult for teachers to really understand or begin to address Asian American students' educational identities and needs.

Perceptions of Asian Americans as foreigners and the model minority curtail genuine progress. Pang (1997) emphasizes the need for teachers who work with Asian American students to care about the whole child, including not only their educational but also social and psychological needs. Achieving such an end requires helping teachers critically examine their own racial identity development (Carter, 2000; Carter & Goodwin, 1994) and prejudices (Pang & Park, 2003) to then build a foundation of knowledge on which to work most appropriately and effectively with Asian American youth.

ASIAN AMERICANS IN HIGHER EDUCATION RESEARCH

The general understanding of Asian Americans in higher education is also one of high achievement, with a specific tenor of their overrepresentation at elite, prestigious

universities. This discourse is particularly visible in the debate about affirmative action because critics of these race-conscious policies hold Asian Americans up as exemplars of individual effort and hard work. However, scholars are embarking on the important task of deconstructing these representations and revealing the complicated, intersectional realities of Asian American college students and faculty.

Representations

A significant body of research critically examines the representation of Asian Americans in higher education, particularly in the context of affirmative action admissions policies. Much of the research on Asian Americans in higher education relates to the admissions controversy of the 1980s where Asian American activists charged that campus administrators had placed a cap on Asian American enrollment at elite universities such as Brown; Yale; Princeton; Cornell; Stanford; University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA); and University of California, Berkeley. From 1983 to 1986, Asian American enrollments at these schools remained steady and were lower than White admissions despite the increasing size of the Asian American applicant pool. Nakanishi (1989) and Wang (1988) detail the statistical disparity in admissions, changing admissions policies that discriminated against Asian American applicants, and the rationale offered by some administrators that Asian Americans were overrepresented at these campuses.

By far the most thorough examination of the admissions controversy and the shifting representations of Asian Americans in the political discourse is by Takagi (1992), who documents that although the investigation initially focused on charges that Asian American applicants were being denied admission in favor of Whites, by 1989, the image of the model minority reemerged as the debate turned to affirmative action admissions as the real culprit for Asian American rejection. Takagi notes that as Asian Americans were lauded as the new victims of affirmative action, they became an important political tool used by those who sought to repeal race-conscious policies.

During the admissions controversy, the image of Asian Americans as models separated them from other minority groups, grouping them with Whites as victims of affirmative action. At the same time, the image of Asian American students as foreign and the yellow peril taking over campuses also was evoked in the discourse of Asian American overrepresentation, which implied that Asian American student numbers had to be limited because they did not contribute to diversity because they were all the same (S. S. Lee, 2006). The tenuous position of Asian Americans and their representation in affirmative action has been examined as the 1990s witnessed a repeal of affirmative action. For instance, Omi and Takagi (1996) show how in the 1990s in California, Asian Americans were consistently depicted as victims of affirmative action, claimed by the political Right and abandoned by the Left who did not know what to do with a minority group that did too well.

This representation of Asian Americans is the result of a limited Black/White framework in which "minority" and "high achievement" seem to be incompatible

concepts and, as a result, reifies the idea that Asian Americans are no longer minorities. Asian Americans have been “de-minoritized” (S. S. Lee, 2006) and scholars point out that Asian American are now routinely ignored. Osajima (1995b) discusses how Asian American college students struggle to prove that they are still minorities as they are rendered invisible, their academic and student services needs unmet. Inkelas (2003a, 2003b) describes Asian Pacific Americans as “diversity’s missing minority”; analyses of APA student attitudes on affirmative action reveal that students feel marginalized by admissions policies that do not offer them underrepresented minority benefits or majority legacy benefits (Inkelas, 2003a; Louie, 2004). To capture this frustration, Inkelas (2003a) describes these students feeling as if they are in a racial “no-man’s land” (p. 635). Such theoretical constraints limit the ways in which non-Black minorities experience higher education.

Although the admissions controversy itself is now more than 20 years old, the issues relating to Asian Americans as the model minority persist today and remain a challenge to higher education researchers who seek to deconstruct this simplistic representation. Vigilance regarding these representations is necessary to gain an accurate understanding of Asian Americans in higher education. Two levels of research seek to reveal a more accurate understanding of Asian Americans in higher education and their persistent needs—macrolevel studies that examine administrative policies and aggregate statistics and microlevel studies that highlight Asian American students’ experiences and voices.

Macrolevel Studies: Deconstructing Representations

Large-scale statistical studies of Asian American students have a common mantra: disaggregate. Once data is separated along ethnicity, gender, and a host of other variables, a more complex picture is revealed. Hsia’s (1988) work is a comprehensive quantitative analysis of Asian American achievement in education and occupation that persists and remains salient today. Despite their educational success, Asian Americans face barriers of access to higher education and economic parity. Hsia also discusses the limitations of aggregate data given the wide diversity of experiences under the Asian American rubric, such as along ethnic lines (Southeast Asian students having higher high school drop-out rates) and academic discipline. One of Hsia’s most consistent findings is that Asian American students score lower on achievement tests measuring verbal aptitude and score higher on quantitative and math tests than do Whites. This finding is consistent across ethnic groups and even after several generations in the United States (with the exception of a small proportion of socioeconomically and educationally advantaged Asian Americans).

Similar themes were discovered in later studies by Hsia and Hirano-Nakanishi (1995) and Escueta and O’Brien (1991), who disaggregated data to reveal that Southeast Asian American groups experience lower rates of high school completion than other Asian American subgroups and that Asian Americans are concentrated in business and physical science fields. The most comprehensive and recent examination of disaggregate data by Hune and Chan (1997) critiques the model minority

myth and points to structural barriers and opportunities that have enabled APAs to excel in some areas of higher education but not in others. The strength of this research is the critical analysis of data that reveal the bimodal nature of APA educational achievement (with high rates of both college completion and high school dropouts), a gender gap, and ethnic disparity (Southeast Asians and Pacific Islanders at the lower spectrum). APA achievement in disciplines also is uneven, with higher representation in sciences and math along all levels of education through the doctorate degree. Hune and Chan advocate for additional research on this diverse group.

Research also shows that academic persistence remains an issue, despite images of their success. As disaggregated data shows, Yeh (2004–2005) argues that research needs to focus on non–East Asian American subgroups to identify barriers to low academic persistence rates due to immigrant/refugee status, academic underpreparedness, first-generation college status, language barriers, low socioeconomic status, family demands and obligations, and cultural adjustment. In addition, institutional barriers include marginalization and racism on campus, cultural barriers to effective student services, model minority stereotype pressures, and lack of financial aid.

Community Colleges

Statistical studies of Asian American students in community colleges also identify persistent barriers for this population and challenge the image of Asian American model minority students concentrated at elite universities. Limited research has been conducted on Asian American students in community colleges, despite the fact that a 1990 study found that 40% of Asian American students in higher education were in 2-year community colleges (Kiang, 1992, p. 98) and that according to the 2000–2001 U.S. Census, APAs made up 15% of all students enrolled in 2-year institutions (Lew, Chang, & Wang, 2005, p. 64). Because of this lack of research, Lew et al. (2005) call APA students in community colleges the “overlooked minority.”

Local studies, however, reveal that APA students in community colleges face significant barriers. Kiang’s (1992) study of students at a public urban university (whose demographics are shared with local community college students) revealed that Asian American students had high rates of working part-time, lower retention rates than White students, and frustrations with language barriers, family obligations, and anti-Asian racism. Kiang also discovered that AAS courses provided a supportive learning environment for these students, who began to see themselves reflected in the curriculum. X. Yang and Rendon’s (1994) study of Asian students in North Carolina’s community college system revealed that Asian students were more strongly influenced by the advice of their families and friends as opposed to informational literature or college recruiters. In addition, obstacles to attending community college involved greater job and family obligations, which limited Asian students’ time. Makuakane-Drechsel and Hagedorn (2000) examined Hawaiian students at four community colleges in Oahu and identified predictive variables for

academic persistence that included cumulative grade point average, financial aid, and average credit hours. These findings point to specific challenges in ensuring a wider access to and persistence in community colleges for Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) students.

In addition to access and persistence issues, Lew et al. (2005) cite studies that APA community college students report dissatisfaction with faculty, discrimination and marginalization on campus, and a lack of APA faculty representation. These studies reveal that APA students struggle on community college campuses, and they highlight the reality that a significant proportion of APA college students are overlooked when the focus is on the Asian American model minority at elite universities.

Student Affairs Policies and Implications

Research in student affairs related to Asian American college students is a growing field. Several studies examine university policies and student services and how they affect Asian American students.⁴ The persistent model minority myth is discussed in particular to the ways in which it perpetuates barriers to effective services for Asian American students. For instance, a study by Liang and Sedlacek (2003) found that White student affairs practitioners held stereotypical positive attitudes toward Asian American students (seeing them as nonthreatening, technically inclined, and hard working), yet at the same time, the practitioners did not express sensitivity to Asian American students in regard to family obligations or academic pressures. The authors challenge practitioners to be more vigilant of stereotypes and to be more culturally sensitive.

Delucchi and Do (1996) demonstrate how the model minority myth can lead to higher education's indifference of Asian Americans as victims of racial intolerance and compromised services. Using a University of California campus as a case study, the authors reported how administrators would not characterize the harassment of a Vietnamese American student as racially motivated, whereas racist incidents against African Americans were quickly defined as such. The authors point out how the model minority stereotype kept administrators from recognizing when Asian American students were victims of racism on campus.

The process by which Asian American students might internalize the model minority stereotype is revealed in a study by R. Yang, Byers, Ahuna, and Castro (2002), who proposed that Asian American students might avoid seeking Asian American targeted services if they internalized the model minority stereotype. They found that Asian American students who reported valuing their family backgrounds used ethnic specific services more often, whereas those who disidentified with their cultural heritage did not, which might point to attempted acculturation or an acceptance of the model minority myth.

Several researchers also have examined Asian American student identity development and related psychological issues. Kawaguchi (2003), Alvarez (2002), and Kodama, McEwen, Liang, and Lee (2002) propose identity development models for Asian American students, cautioning that Asian Americans are diverse and may be at

different stages at different times. Understanding identity development can help assist student affairs practitioners in providing the most appropriate services. Research also shows that pan-Asian identity and student activism assist APA students in coping with and combating ignorance and discrimination and developing a stronger commitment to their communities (Inkelas, 2004; Rhoads, Lee, & Yamada, 2002).⁵

Asian American Student Experiences and Voices

What are Asian American college students' experiences in reality? This section will highlight research findings that focus on these experiences and voices to uncover a complicated and diverse picture, one that challenges simplistic stereotypes of the model minority and shows how Asian Americans are still racialized as culturally foreign and distinct. Asian American experiences also are best understood using an intersectional approach.

Campus Climate

Campus climate is a rich field, and Asian American students are included in several studies. A significant body of work produced from the 1980s to the 2000s from a student affairs/counseling psychology perspective on campus climate included some coverage of Asian American students. These studies' findings include the fact that minority students (including Asian Americans) report greater social alienation than White students at predominantly White institutions (Jones, Castellanos, & Cole, 2002; Loo & Rolison, 1986), that Asian students who experienced racism on campus had lower social adjustment (LeSure, 1994), that Asian American negative perceptions of campus climate were correlated with self-reported levels of depression (Cress & Ikeda, 2003), and that Asian American students reported experiences with stereotypes and prejudice and dissatisfaction despite academic satisfaction and persistence (Bennett & Okinaka, 1990; Loo & Rolison, 1986). Although, in general, Asian American students did not report levels of discrimination as high as African American students, their reports of being singled out, stereotyped, or harassed were significant and higher than that of White students (Ancis, Sedlacek, & Mohr, 2000; Asian Pacific American Education Advisory Committee, 1990; LeSure, 1994; Mack, Tucker, & Cha, 2000). Incidents range from racial slurs and fights (Alvarez & Yeh, 1999) to subtle comments that single out Asian Americans or ignore them (Woo, 1997). These incidents are underreported by Asian American students as well and implications are discussed to improve student services (Kotori & Malaney, 2003).

Furthermore, Rohrlick, Alvarado, Zaruba, and Kallio (1998) insightfully demonstrate that the model minority's presumption that APA students all do well and do not need any assistance (as evidenced by persistence and statistical numbers) renders APA students invisible. Despite this perception, their study at the University of Michigan in 1996 found that APA students reported gaining less from their education, reported a less favorable campus climate than White students, and less overall satisfaction with campus life. Rohrlick et al. (1998) conclude,

When measured by enrollment, retention, college grades, and graduation rates, Asian/APA students appear to be among the most successful students on our campus. It is incongruous, then, to find that their assessment of their undergraduate experience is less positive than other students, and troubling that their greatest differences occur in areas central to the University's mission, such as the development of writing and communication skills, gains in critical thinking, and experiences with faculty in the classroom. The initial comparison of responses suggests that APA students have a different experience on our campus than do White students—and one that is less positive. *If that is true, then it certainly challenges the myth that has grown out of the model minority image: that is, all we have to do is enroll APA students, and they will thrive on campus.* These results suggest that we need to revisit that assumption. (p. 9, italics added)

Although some of these studies are dated and indicative of heightened anti-Asian sentiment in the late 1980s and mid 1990s, the findings show that Asian Americans report an alienating campus climate and support the argument that they are not similar to Whites. In addition, even high-achieving Asian American students who persist and achieve academically still face these alienating environments where they are racialized as Others, a reality that needs to be addressed.

*Complexities of Asian American Experiences: College Choices,
Asian American Student Voices, and Families*

Asian American students are diverse. Several studies examining Asian American college students' choices reveal ethnic diversity and a push for research on ethnic subgroups. There are a host of many complex factors affecting Asian American students' choice of college major; variation was found along ethnic lines, gender, and psychological measures such as locus of control (Song & Glick, 2004). Simpson (2001) also found that Asian American students were more influenced by maternal guidance and high school English courses in choosing between a technical or public service/liberal arts program. Teranishi, Ceja, Antonio, Allen, and McDonough (2004) examined the impact of class and ethnicity on college choice for APA students using data from UCLA's Cooperative Institutional Research Program in 1997. The authors found that Southeast Asians and Chinese were more often from families earning less than \$24,999 a year. In addition, larger proportions of Chinese and Koreans attended highly selective colleges than Filipinos or Southeast Asians. Filipinos and Southeast Asians from the lowest income were more likely to choose a college because it was close to home, and they expressed more major financial concerns about college than did other groups. Along with Japanese students, they also were twice as likely to apply to only one campus, whereas Chinese and Koreans in the sample were likely to apply to five or more colleges.

Socioeconomic status affects groups differently and warrants more research. For instance, Teranishi et al. (2004) found that Chinese students had the highest rates of attending private colleges, but only at the highest socioeconomic levels. This finding is just one example of how intersectional approaches can go beyond a superficial examination of racial or ethnic differences. Louie's (2004) ethnographic study takes this exciting approach as she examines how race, immigration, gender, and class affect the understanding of higher education for Chinese students from well-off suburbs

and from the ethnic enclave of Chinatown. Additional research needs to examine specific subgroups in the APA population given this diversity.

Other studies reveal the complexity of Asian American student experiences and attitudes that involve the intersectionality of a number of variables. Inkelas (2003a, 2003b) examined APA college students' attitudes toward affirmative action at a large, public, midwestern university. In a large-scale survey, Inkelas (2003b) conducted quantitative regressions to determine factors that lead to APA support for affirmative action. She found that a complicated web of interrelated factors were relevant, including academic major (humanities or social sciences), gender (women supported affirmative action more than did men), informal conversations with peers about diversity, participation in diversity programming, and racial/ethnic identity. Inkelas reveals that attitudes are complicated and interrelated and affected by ideology and college experiences.

The representation of Asian Americans as the model minority and foreigner projects an understanding of distinct (i.e., non-Western) Asian culture that highly values family cohesion, deference to authority, and education. Just as K–12 research reveals more complicated family relations that question these presumptions, higher education researchers who examine the Asian American family reveal a different reality.

Although family expectations may be high for Asian American students, the pressures also result in high demands and intergenerational conflict. For instance, Gloria and Ho (2003) examined measures of noncognitive dimensions of perceptions of university climate and social support in the college adaptation of APA students in the Southwest. They found that APA students might not see their family support as completely positive given the pressures that parental expectations can bring (APA students reported using peer support more often than family support). Osajima (1991) also found these pressures in his qualitative study of Asian American college students and the "hidden injuries of race." Osajima documents how Asian American students expressed persistent experiences with racism and highly complicated family relationships that challenge a model minority image of strong Asian families with high educational expectations. Although students credited family support and expectations as influencing their educational aspirations, they also expressed frustration and compromised familial relationships due to these expectations. Work by R. Lee, Su, and Yoshida (2005) examines the various strategies Asian American college students used to cope with intergenerational conflict. This research complicates the idea of perfect Asian American families.

What about the famed Asian American family values of education? Louie's (2004) work examines the role of the Chinese family in conveying messages about higher education and, more important, how Chinese American children make sense of these messages in developing their own views of higher education and their possibilities of socioeconomic mobility. Unlike the model minority image that depicts Asians as "honorary Whites," she finds instead that race is highly salient and both suburban and enclave Chinese parents frame education as a way to buffer the effects of racial discrimination. Parents emphasize that their children must work hard

because racism closes off equal access to opportunities. Children were aware of structural barriers for their advancement and expressed uncertainty about their future. Kibria's (2002) study of second-generation Chinese and Korean American young adults revealed similar views of education as a strategy to cope with racism.

Despite this awareness of structural barriers to advancement due to race, Louie (2004) also found that students internalized and embraced an ethnic-cultural script that attributed educational achievement (or lack thereof) to the Chinese family. Chinese parents (and Asian parents in general) were seen as more strict and emphasized education and hard work, giving Chinese children a distinct advantage over other groups. This attribution is troubling because it persisted despite the students' nuanced and critical analyses of the model minority stereotype, awareness of foreigner racialization, and belief in structural barriers to advancement along racial and socioeconomic lines.

Kibria's (2002) study also revealed similar attitudes, with some of her respondents embracing the idea of Asian cultural values of hard work in their rejection of affirmative action and in contrasting themselves with other racial minorities. Interpreting the model minority stereotype and the messages of Asian family values as positive, Kibria (2002) concludes, "Fueled by the very fact of their racialized marginality, Asian Americans *may ironically affirm the stereotype of themselves as a model minority in an effort to ease their own path of integration into American society*" (p. 206, italics added). These studies point to the ways in which representations are negotiated and can be internalized, particularly for second-generation Asians with immigrant parents. Future work should examine if a more heightened critical perspective emerges in later generations and the ways in which Asian Americans contest or accept these messages.

Faculty Issues

Research on Asian American faculty and administrators reveals similar representations of faculty as model minorities who are passive, hard-working, and nonconfrontational, for example, and foreigners whose cultural differences are so great they are incapable of leadership. Nakanishi (1993) and Hune and Chan (1997) highlight the issues of APA faculty and administrators, including the underrepresentation of APA faculty as administrators, the concentration of faculty in sciences and engineering, and the greater concentration of Asian foreign nationals among faculty than native-born Asian Americans (a finding that points more to educational opportunity abroad than in the United States for Asians). Hune and Chan also point out APA faculty struggle with lower tenure rates, especially for Asian American women who also face a gender gap, with APA men serving in three out of four faculty positions (p. 57). Asian American faculty who conduct research in AAS or other ethnic or gender studies fields also face marginalization for work that is seen as not objective or rigorous (Chan, 2005; Nakanishi, 1993).

Asian American women face additional stereotypes and barriers due to sexism and an image of Asian women as exotic and submissive. General collections reveal rich

data on the experiences of women of color faculty (TuSmith & Reddy, 2002; Vargas, 2002). These collections are all written from the perspective of women of color and their struggles establishing authority, credibility, and objectivity in the classroom. Hune's research (1997, 1998) on APA women in higher education greatly adds to this literature, citing racialized and gendered stereotypes of the exotic Dragon Lady, lowered tenure rates for Asian American women, and their underrepresentation at upper administrative levels.

The experiences of Asian women faculty also are outlined in a recent edited collection by Li and Beckett (2006). This collection features a range of studies and personal narratives of Asian and Asian American women struggling with marginalization due to racism and sexism, establishing credibility as nonnative English speakers, securing tenure and promotion, building mentoring and networking relationships, balancing multiple roles and value systems, and constructing positive identities. Several contributors speak to the issue as nonnative English-speaking Teachers of English to Students of Other Languages (TESOL) professors and the privilege that nativity brings in the largely White field. Another important theme is the resistance these women face by students, including Asian students themselves who internalize racism and sexism that results in their greater deference to White male professors. While highlighting voices of nonnative English speakers, this collection reveals barriers for Asian and Asian American women faculty.

Additional research examines tenure battles of Asian American faculty (Minami, 1990; Nakanishi, 1990). Cho (1997) also discusses how racialized sexual harassment is a real barrier for APA women faculty, who face stereotypes of being exotic, sexual objects. She discusses two major court battles of APA women who fought racialized sexual harassment in academia and the ways in which the institutions defended their harassers.

The quantitative data of Asian American faculty and administrative representation in higher education is beginning to be addressed. For example, the Committee of 100 (2005) examined the representation of APAs in the top quartile of higher education institutions and found that APAs are underrepresented in the top administrative positions of president, provost, or chancellor (most APA presidents were at community colleges, in the University of Hawaii system, or at for-profit institutions). The committee's report card raises questions as a starting point for additional research.

A more thoroughly researched study by S. M. Lee (2002) sets out to determine if Asian American faculty face a glass ceiling in higher education. Using salary as the dependent variable, Lee found that although initially there was no significant difference between Asian and White faculty salaries (thus negating a glass ceiling effect), upon further investigation, problematic differences did emerge, including different effects from gaining tenure, publication productivity, and service. In addition, native-born Whites benefited more from being native, whereas native-born Asians did not yield the same benefits. Hence, Lee concludes that there was some support for and against the existence of a glass ceiling.

APAs are highly underrepresented as chief executive officers in higher education. Chan and Wang (1991) and Hune and Chan (1997) point out that Asian American faculty are not identified as potential administrators and are not mentored to take these positions. Stereotypes of Asian Americans as not having the right leadership style because they are quiet or passive evokes ideas of their foreignness. Although they are the model minority and are hard working, there is something else that keeps them from being fully embraced by the majority at the highest levels of higher education; hence, they continue to be marginalized.

The Field of Asian American Studies

The field of AAS, part of a larger ethnic studies movement, emerged in the late 1960s as a product of student demands for a more inclusive curriculum and campus. Although challenges remain in institutionalizing the discipline (Chan, 2005; Chang, 1999; Endo & Wei, 1988), research has shown that AAS makes the curriculum more relevant to Asian American students. For example, in his study of APA students at a public urban university, Kiang (1992) discovered that AAS courses provided a supportive learning environment for these students who began to see themselves reflected in the curriculum. In addition, AAS advances research and teaching that educates others about Asian American experiences and deconstructs simplistic representations. Scholars have pointed to the important ways that the field of AAS and ethnic studies transforms the curriculum and “democratizes” higher education (Hune, 1995), providing exemplary principles for general education such as interdisciplinary approaches and pedagogy that reach diverse students (Chang & Kiang, 2002). It is precisely through the intellectual contributions by scholars in AAS that educators can now begin to see the interconnections between the school lives of students and how we are all embodied within larger sociohistorical contexts. Educators and higher education administrators need to see the intellectual rigor such programs like ethnic and gender studies bring to academic institutions by engaging in the fundamental tenets of intellectual diversity and freedom. Such programs serve unique functions for racial minority students, but they also provide needed services to all students by reflecting the realities of our society.

One of the continuing challenges in institutionalizing AAS is the fact that many educators and administrators have difficulty discerning between Asian studies and AAS, ultimately conflating the two. Although another area of transnational studies has emerged that bridges the two, they are each very distinct fields and areas of study that should not be confused (Hune, 2001). The fact that AAS is commonly mistaken for Asian studies and rarely mistaken for American studies points to the persistent notion that Asian Americans are foreigners and not part of U.S. history. Dismantling one’s conception of Asian-ness as foreignness is a step in the right direction.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Representations of Asian Americans are highly political and manufactured to support a stance, as in the case of affirmative action, and distract us from understanding

the diversity of Asian American experiences (Chang & Kiang, 2002). For those who embrace a model minority image, it is easy to disregard Asian American students in favor of more pressing minority students who may still be more visibly underrepresented. Although these disparities for groups such as African Americans, Latinas/Latinos, and Native Americans are pressing concerns, Asian Americans should not be excluded based on statistics alone. Research presented here reveals not only a wide variation of experiences, needs, and outcomes along ethnic lines but also a more complicated situation in which Asian American students struggle to interpret and negotiate the racial and cultural demands of identity development, family relations, college access and retention, campus racial climate, and an invisibility in education policies.

As for any group of students, viewing Asian American students through a particular ideological lens has powerful implications for school policies. For example, through critical race theory, Teranishi (2002) examined racial climate for APA students in four California public high schools. He found that teachers and counselors expected Chinese students to be the model minority with high educational aspirations, hence tracking them into college preparatory programs. Conversely, Filipino students reported that they were viewed and treated as gang members and tracked into vocational programs, without college counseling. By centering these students' voices, Teranishi found that the different stereotypes they faced affected their racial, ethnic, and academic identities and ultimately affected their postsecondary aspirations.

It is a critical time to better understand the educational needs of Asian Americans. High-stakes testing at the state and federal level overlooks Asian American students by lumping them in the aggregate. The 2001 No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act does not require ethnic disaggregation of student performance, thus masking Asian American ethnic and socioeconomic variation. Kiang (2004) discusses these issues in regard to the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System, the mandatory standardized tests assessing English, math, and science/technology. In schools with the highest concentrations of Southeast Asian students, the mean scaled scores for Asian students at the 10th-grade level was failing compared to other districts where Chinese and Indian students were passing. We do not see this reality if we focus on the aggregate.

High-stakes testing also poses tremendous educational obstacles for nonnative speakers of English, a particular problem for Asian immigrant students. Genishi, Stires, and Yung-Chan (2001) caution against the narrowing effects of NCLB on teachers' instructional practices with English-language learners at the prekindergarten levels and they demonstrate the positive effects of embedding early literacy development within meaningful social and cultural contexts. S. J. Lee and Kumashiro (2005) note that although research shows it takes 4 to 9 years to achieve second-language fluency, NCLB guidelines require English Language Learners (ELLs) be tested in English and language arts after only 3 years. NCLB also requires students with limited English proficiency to still take the math portions of tests with no hiatus. Although some may surmise that math performance is not affected by language proficiency, Wright (2006) critically examines the barriers for immigrant students learning math. Schools bear the brunt of providing

bilingual instruction, which is primarily in Spanish—a disadvantage for Asian immigrant students. Students' ability to catch up with their peers depends on their prior education before coming to the United States and their school's resources; although students are entitled to linguistic accommodation in taking tests, some schools lack the resources to provide it. Wright also demonstrates that the vocabulary in math problems (particularly in complex word problems and in advanced computations that require abstract reasoning) poses significant barriers for English-language learners and requires a more advanced language proficiency than presumed.

The state of Asian Americans in higher education is also facing a critical time. In January 2003, Congressman Wu (Oregon) introduced H.R. Bill 333 to amend the Higher Education Act, which would designate "Asian American and Pacific Islander-serving institutions" and provide federal dollars to help recruit and retain AAPI students (Laanan & Starobin, 2004). Such legislation challenges the presumption that APA college students do not need assistance. In addition, the continued debates about affirmative action in the wake of the 2003 Supreme Court Michigan cases *Gratz v. Bollinger* and *Grutter v. Bollinger* (and the representations of Asian Americans in the debate) have led to legal articles that examine the ways in which diversity has been narrowly defined to exclude Asian American students (Choy, 2005; Gee, 2004; Wu, 1995). Legal scholars such as Cho (1998, cited in Asian Pacific American Law Students Association Symposium, 1998) also have argued that parity cannot be the sole measure for lack of discrimination. Asian American overrepresentation in higher education is an obscuring image that evokes the yellow peril and essentializes a diverse Asian American population as all the same.

Research highlighting Asian American students' voices, identities, choices, and families reveals complicated realities that involve a variety of factors beyond simply ethnicity or race. New educational research takes primarily an intersectional approach, introducing other sectors of identity.⁶ For instance, Joshi (2006) has studied the interplay of religious and racial identity for Indian Americans; Kumashiro (2001, 2004) has examined how students and activists negotiate race and sexuality; Palmer (2001) introduces new research on how gender and racial bias affect Korean young women adoptees' racial identity development and educational experiences as well as how transcultural adoption affects their identity in distinct ways; and studies by Poon-McBrayer and Garcia (2000) and Parette and Huer (2002), respectively, explore the process of referring, assessing, and placing Asian American students with learning disabilities in special education programs and working with Asian American families whose children have augmentative or alternative communication needs. These intersectional approaches assert the multiplicity and hybridity of the Asian American experience.

However, we cannot deny that racism exists and that Asian Americans must negotiate and challenge racially constraining representations. This reality is evident by the fact that even high-achieving Asian American groups such as East Asians and South Asians, who may appear to be the model minority, remain either not fully integrated or seen as White. In this way, it is necessary to understand and examine the ways in

which race continues to affect Asian American students, ways that are not captured by statistics or notions of parity alone. Racialization of foreignness and alienation are not measured by statistics and may not emerge in rates of academic persistence or grade point average. More nuanced understandings of race and racializations in education are needed to see the real experiences of Asian American students as they negotiate inequitable and discriminatory social structural conditions. This understanding is critical to seeing Asian Americans in their full complexity and diversity and to avoid essentialist notions of culture that feed into an Othering discourse. It is only through these approaches that we can begin to truly contest pernicious representations of the model minority and foreigner, generating a more accurate understanding of Asian Americans in their full diversity and humanity.

NOTES

¹ We use the term “Asian American” in reference to individuals of Asian descent in the United States (Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Indian, Filipino, Vietnamese, and other Southeast Asian groups) who have been racialized and grouped as Asian in policy and legislation. There is great variation in the research literature as to use of the term Asian American or Asian Pacific American (APA) in describing this community. When referencing other studies, we use the term chosen by the author; we are aware that an uncritical inclusion of Pacific Islander Americans within the Asian American rubric runs the risk of marginalizing and conflating this group, which has distinct histories (Diaz, 1994; Kauanui, 2005). For this reason, when we refer to this population, we use the term “Asian American.”

² The historical literature on Asian American education is sparse. Educational historian Eileen Tamura (2001) provides an alarming look at how the major publication within the field, the *History of Education Quarterly*, published only one essay and one book review related to Asian American educational history within a 10-year period (1990-1999). Of equal import is another finding that “only 15.1 percent of the essays and essay reviews (given all the publications within the ten year period) and an even smaller 9.5 percent of the book reviews focused on issues of race and ethnicity, most of which were on African Americans, followed by European Americans, and then Native Americans” (p. 65). Important contributions to the field include Tamura’s (2003) edited special issue of the *History of Education Quarterly*, Pak (2002), Asato (2005), Okihiro (1999), and Austin (2004). Aside from specific texts devoted to Asian American educational experiences, most notably the edited book by Nakanishi and Nishida (1995) and Weinberg (1997), which include brief histories of some of the major Asian ethnic groups, the field of educational history needs to develop more inclusive scholarship that reflects the changing nature of students’ lives in the latter half of the 20th century.

³ Research on West Asian students is also an important topic to study, and the racialization of Americans of Middle Eastern descent is becoming a pointed issue, particularly after the events of September 11, 2001. Still, for purposes of this article, we are focusing on Asian American experiences as defined in Note 1.

⁴ An important contribution to this field is the special journal issue of *New Directions for Student Services* (Vol. 97) edited by McEwan, Kodama, Alvarez, Lee, and Liang (2002) titled *Working With Asian American College Students*.

⁵ Psychological research on Asian American college students is also a burgeoning field, examining the impact of the model minority stereotype and bicultural pressures on mental health (see Cheryan & Bodenhausen, 2000; B. Kim & Omizo, 2005).

⁶ It is important to note that it was not until 1952 that full citizenship to all Asian groups was granted. Given that fact, as well as that the majority of Asian immigration to the United

States occurred post-1965, including the resettlement of Southeast Asian refugees in the 1970s and 1980s, we are in the midst of creating a new generation of critical scholars in Asian American studies.

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