Asian Pacific Americans and Critical Race Theory: An Examination of School Racial Climate

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The educational research on Asian Pacific Americans (APAs[2]) has left many unanswered questions as to what factors, or relationships among factors, affect the educational achievement of Asian Americans (Hurtado, Inkelas, Briggs, & Rhee, 1997; Karen, 1988; McDonough & Antonio, 1996; Teranishi, Ceja, Allen, Suh, & McDonough, 2001). Part of the challenge is that studies have continually found that there is something about "being Asian" that predicts success for Asian American students (Hurtado et al., 1997).

The most common perceptions of Asian Americans have been that they are educationally successful, over-represented in higher education, or in general, a "successful or model minority" (Hacker, 1992; Nakanishi, 1988; Takagi, 1992). Because of the perceived educational success of APAs, they have often been excluded altogether from racial discourse on educational issues because it is believed that there is no need to address their educational needs or issues (Nakanishi, 1988; Ong, 1994, 2000).

Asian Americans have also been misrepresented because they are categorized and treated as a single, homogeneous racial group. The 1996/97 Minorities in Higher Education Report (Hune & Chan, 1997) indicated that aggregated data on APAs homogenizes the experiences of APAs and depicts a distorted picture of the educational participation of subgroups within the APA population. But in fact, the APA population is quite diverse with ethnic, social class, and immigrant subgroups that encounter different social and institutional experiences. The premise for this study was centered upon the differences that are evident in postsecondary outcomes of different APA ethnic subpopulations (Gomez & Teranishi, 2001; Hurtado et al., 1997; McDonough & Antonio, 1996; Teranishi et al., 2001). For example, in 2000, although APAs as a whole represented nearly 40% of the total enrollment at University of California (UC) Berkeley, the proportion of enrollment comprised by students from different APA ethnic subgroups ranged widely. Although Chinese and Filipino American populations in California are of equal size (about 700,000 among each ethnic group), Chinese Americans were nearly seven times more likely to attend UC Berkeley than Filipino Americans.

In addition to college enrollment, there are differences among APAs with regard to employment patterns, per capita income, and poverty rates (Teranishi, 2002). In 1990, while Asian Americans as a whole had a poverty rate of 14% —half the rate of Blacks and Latinos— there were ethnic groups and certain pockets of APA communities that faced economic hardship that exceeded that of other communities of color. In 1990, 64% of Hmongs, 43% of Cambodians, and 35% of Laotians lived in poverty, in contrast to 30% of the black population and 28% of the Latino population nationally.

The objective of this study is to address some of the common misperceptions of the APA educational experience through an examination of how students from different APA ethnic subgroups are stereotyped and stigmatized at school because of their race or ethnicity. In particular, I examine how the ethnic and racial experiences at school of Chinese and Filipino Americans affect their educational processes and postsecondary planning and opportunities. Filipino and Chinese Americans were chosen for comparison primarily because of their demographic comparability. Filipino and Chinese Americans constitute the two largest Asian groups, both in California and in the nation. The two ethnic groups share similarities in immigration patterns, social class levels, and migration to and settlement in ethnic enclaves (Teranishi, 2002).

The research questions guiding this study are:

- In what ways are race and/or ethnicity a factor in the educational experiences of Chinese and Filipino Americans?

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- Do race and/or ethnicity affect these students' ability to develop and pursue postsecondary aspirations?

Most perspectives on the postsecondary aspirations of Asian Americans have focused on the role of parental encouragement, involvement, and support. This stream of work also includes the common perception that immigrant students face pressure from their parents to take advantage of the educational opportunities available in the U.S. However, other research has found that there are a number of factors that make it difficult for immigrant parents to guide their children through the U.S. educational process. For example, many parents believe that their role is to provide the expectations while it is the responsibility of school personnel to provide the guidance and information for their children to pursue higher education. Thus, for many students of color and immigrant populations, school resources play a central role in providing specific postsecondary guidance and opportunities. It is therefore important to examine the relationships that students develop with teachers, counselors, and other institutional agents in their schools, which may differ for students from different racial or ethnic backgrounds.

RACIAL STEREOTYPES AND IDENTITY

Scholars have already begun to examine how racial stereotypes impact the lives of people of color. At the turn of the century, W. E. B. Du Bois (1903) coined the term "double consciousness" to describe the sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others. Claude Steele (1997) applied the concept to students, and used the term "stereotype threat" to describe how students' academic achievement is affected by the threat of being viewed through the lens of a negative stereotype, or the fear of doing something that would inadvertently confirm racial stereotypes. Further, in a study of Latino graduate students, Daniel Solórzano (1998) used the term "racial microaggressions" to describe the everyday racialized incidents that students face in college, and impede their feelings of acceptance and integration into academe. This study develops a basic and fundamental understanding of how these racial experiences play out for APA students during high school and how it influences their academic and social experiences.

One major focus of this study is to examine the factors that contribute to the success of students from different racial/ethnic backgrounds. "Success" may refer to cognitive growth, competency, and academic achievement demonstrated through grades, standardized testing, specialized knowledge, and adjustment into the institutional milieu. Hence, one way to measure "success" is in terms of persistence, grades, and graduation rates. However, another way to measure success is to examine whether or not students are able to develop and sustain supportive and positive relationships with teachers and peers who can contribute to their achievement or to opportunities beyond high school. In this case, success might refer to social and affective growth, which promote positive self-esteem, improve interpersonal relationships, and motivate students to increase their educational and career aspirations.

Of course, the impact of the school relationships that students form is dependent on the institutional context in which they are positioned. Therefore, another focus of this research is to assess and describe the impact of the institutional context on the educational experiences and outcomes of APA students from different ethnic and immigration backgrounds. The key to understanding the concept of racial climate in schools is to consider that students are educated in distinct racial contexts. These contexts are predicated by a number of factors such as a school's historical legacy of inclusion or exclusion of various racial/ethnic groups, its structural diversity in terms of the numerical representation of various racial/ethnic groups, the social climate (defined as the racial perceptions and attitudes that different groups have of one another), as well as behavioral climate dimensions characterized by intergroup relations at school. Since the institutional context and racial climate is so critical in understanding students' racialized experiences, I examine how racial climate varies across different school contexts and may vary for students from different ethnic or immigration backgrounds.

Students from different ethnic groups are often lumped together in a monolith racial category. Blacks have been treated as a homogeneous group with respect to race relations (Carter & Helms, 1988). Furthermore, Teranishi (2002) and Teranishi et al. (2001) found that among Asian Pacific Americans there exists ethnic, immigration, and social class diversity that affect the postsecondary opportunities available for secondary students. Among the conclusions derived from these studies were that scholars should not assume that just because a student is among a particular racial group, he or she will identify with others from that same background or culture. Gordon (1985) stresses the importance of appreciating the heterogeneity of different racial groups. By assuming that ethnic groups among racial groups are all alike, researchers "camouflage" the realities of their uniqueness. One way to understand the diversity among different racial groups is to assess the racial identity attitudes that different ethnic subgroups have of their shared racial and/or ethnic categories.

Thus, another focus of this study is to examine how the ethnic and racial identity of students from different APA ethnic subpopulations affects their social relationships and school performance. Research that examines racial identity development stresses the importance of a strong racialized self-concept, which serves as a buffer against racially motivated experiences, each of which

have implications for how a student may perform academically or socially (Worrell, Cross, & Vandiver, 2001). Attitudes concerning racial identity are paramount to the psychological functioning for those who live in societies where their group and culture are at best poorly represented (politically, economically, and in the media) and are at worst discriminated against (Phinney, 1992). However, is it also possible for positive racial stereotypes, such as those of Asians as a model minority, to have a positive effect on self-esteem and self-perception? This question along with the other guiding questions in this study was central to examining the process by which racial, ethnic, and social identity develops for APA students.

This article uses a critical race theory (CRT) framework to critically examine APA students' high school experiences and outcomes. From a CRT perspective, this study attempts to deconstruct supposed traditional notions of the APA educational experience by demonstrating ethnic and immigrant differences among APA student experiences. The theoretical framework serves both as a guide to unearth certain nuances and subtleties surrounding racial constructs and racial stereotypes, and as a map as to how these factors shape the educational experiences of and opportunities for APA students.

CRITICAL RACE THEORY

Critical race theory is used to help understand the educational experiences of APA students by centering the dialogue on the issue of race as the core of the discussion (Delgado, 1995; Matsuda, 1991). Solórzano (1998) explains that, "a critical race theory in education challenges the traditional claims of the educational system and its institutions to objectivity, meritocracy, color and gender blindness, race and gender neutrality, and equal opportunity" (p. 122). Thus, an understanding of the educational experiences of the Asian American population requires a framework that acknowledges the unique racialized status of APAs, as well as their social, political, and economic positions in society. The following describes the utility of CRT within the theoretical, conceptual, and methodological approaches in this study.

Conceptually, critical race theory in education challenges ahistoricism and the uni-disciplinary focus of most analyses and centralizes race and racism in education by placing them in both an historical and contemporary context using interdisciplinary methods (Delgado, 1984, 1989; Garcia, 1995; Harris, 1994; Olivas, 1990). CRT challenges the dominant discourse on race and racism in education by examining how educational theory, policy, and practice have been used to subordinate certain racial and ethnic groups (Solórzano, 1998). Examples of the subordination of race in education can be found in college-choice research, which has predominately relied on data consisting of white students using large quantitative data sets. These studies have become the dominant discourse on, and been used to represent, the college choice experience of all students. Critical race theory contributes to a growing body of work that has demonstrated that students' high school experiences are notably different for African Americans (Allen, 1988; Freeman, 1997; Teranishi, 2000), Latinos (Ceja, 2001; Gandara, 1995; Perez, 1999; Post, 1990), Asian Americans (Gomez & Teranishi, 2001; Hurtado et al., 1997; McDonough & Antonio, 1996; Teranishi, 2002; Teranishi et al., 2001), and Native Americans (Gilbert, 2000; Peshkin, 2000; Wright, Hirlinger, & England, 1998).

I use CRT as a lens to problematize traditional notions of race by examining the intersectionality of ethnicity, social class, and immigration among the APA population (Bell, 1987; Carrasco, 1996; Delgado, 1989, 1995, 1996; Olivas, 1990). These characteristics of the APA population have often been masked by research paradigms that have placed Asian Americans in a black/white racial framework, leaving the study of APAs determined by the frameworks to understand inequities of African Americans vis-à-vis whites. From this perspective, people of color are viewed predominantly as inferior, underprivileged or underrepresented, or underachievers. Conversely, resilient and successful students of color are considered "model minorities" (Stanton-Salazar & Spina, 2000). Allen (1999) explains, "it would be wholly misguided and counterproductive to engage in a game of 'oppression sweepstakes,' pitting various aggrieved parties against one another in competition for the dubious status of 'Year's Most Oppressed'" (pp. 206–207). Rather, the point is to acknowledge the diverse experiences of Asian Americans and the impact on their postsecondary opportunities.

The assumptions of the inferiority paradigm have been identified as: (1) white middle class Americans serve as the standard against which other groups are compared; and (2) the instruments used to measure differences are universally applied across all groups (Padilla & Lindholm, 1995). When viewed within this framework, Asian Americans are considered to have educational achievement levels equal to or greater than Whites. This perspective severely neglects and undermines the study and understanding of the actual educational experiences and processes of Asian American students, as a whole and as distinct ethnic groups.

Critical race theory plays a central role in the methodological approach for this study. As a central principle of CRT, populations that have otherwise been subordinated or silenced can be heard through legitimate narratives that challenge the dominant discourse of reality (Delgado, 1984, 1989; Garcia, 1995; Harris, 1994; Olivas, 1990). Hence, I asked students to describe their educational experiences, perspectives, and perceptions of their college decision-making processes. These stories served as counternarratives to the dominant ideology that has typified our understanding of how APA students form

and realize their postsecondary aspirations. Therefore, applying a CRT lens allowed students to challenge the discourse of Asian Americans as a monolithic and prolific model minority by unveiling the ethnic and social class diversity among Asian American ethnic groups through their narratives.

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The data for this study are drawn from interviews with Filipino and Chinese students at four California public high schools. California is an ideal state in which to examine the APA population; according to the 2000 U.S. Bureau of Census, it is the state with the largest number of APAs in the nation, consisting of nearly 40% of all APAs nationally.

Data Collection Procedure

The data collection for this study consisted of a short survey and in-depth, open-ended interviews designed to examine college decision-making processes and resources. Each interview session began with a short demographic survey to collect background information about the students' families, place of birth, immigration history (if any), and usage of different college information sources. The survey was followed by an in-depth, semi-structured interview. Using CRT in the design of the interview protocol, the questions invoked discussion about the students' access to college information and knowledge, processes and decisions, racial experience and attitudes and identity, and perceptions of opportunities via family members, community members, school agents, and other persons or information sources.[3] Field notes were taken at each site to examine overt and covert elements of ethnicity, immigration, and social class.

Fieldsites and Participants

The fieldsites in this study were chosen primarily because of their APA ethnic student compositions. Two schools, Wilson and Kennedy, had a large ethnic population of Chinese Americans and the other two, Jackson and Hoover, had a large Filipino population (see Table 1). Each of the four schools had a student enrollment representative of the surrounding ethnic community. These schools were purposefully sampled because they were among the schools with the largest enrollment and proportion of either Chinese or Filipino Americans in California. Selecting schools with a large Filipino and Chinese student body allowed me to examine the ethnic social relations within the context of peers who were typically of the same ethnicity as the student participants.

The participants in this study include 80 Chinese American and 80 Filipino American male and female students in their senior year of high school. The study was limited to high school seniors in order to focus on

Table 1
Fieldsite School Demographics

	Number of APAs*	Proportion of all students	Number of respondents
Chinese high schools			
Wilson high	1,642	65%	40
Kennedy high	1,462	68%	40
Filipino high schools			
Hoover high	842	35%	40
Jackson high	932	40%	40

Source: California Basic Education Data System (CBEDS), California Department of Education, 1997.

Note: School names have been replaced with pseudonyms.

*Number and proportion of APAs reflects the ethnic composition of the population in each category, Chinese or Filipino.

students who were most likely to be thinking about a future beyond high school. In addition, participants were selected based on their ethnicity, grade level, course completion, and overall GPA. In most cases, the Chinese or Filipinos from the top 5–10% of the class were recruited as respondents. Nearly all of the respondents' GPAs fell in the range of 2.8 to 3.5 (C+ to B+ range).

Perhaps adding to the social class complexities of the high schools were the educational and language levels of the participants' parents. At Kennedy High, an urban high school located in Los Angeles County, the majority of Chinese students reported that their parents had a high school diploma or less. But at Wilson High, an urban high school in the San Francisco Bay Area, nearly half of the students' parents were college graduates, and 38% of the students' parents had a high school diploma or less, creating a range of students from different social class backgrounds. The Filipino parents from each of the two schools were very similar in their parental educational levels. According to the students, most of the Filipino parents had received at least some college education and learned to speak and understand the English language in the Philippines.

Data Management and Analysis

The analysis of the data involved systematically organizing and exploring interview transcripts, fieldnotes, and other material accumulated during the data collection process (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992). The tape-recorded interviews and fieldnotes were transcribed and then managed using NUD*IST, a computer software program for managing large, qualitative databases. Transcripts were systematically and analytically coded for patterns and themes.

Initial data interpretation was performed through emergent summaries of themes. These themes were interpreted across the ethnicities and social class backgrounds of the respondents. These interpretations were

recorded through "analytic memos" (Creswell, 1994). All analytic memos were reviewed, compared, and analyzed to serve as the basis for the data interpretation.

RESULTS

The purpose of this study is to unpack and explore the different racial and ethnic experiences of Asian Americans in high school. First, as a baseline, I discuss the ways in which postsecondary planning and aspirations of Chinese and Filipinos were similar and different. Second, I examine how the racial and ethnic experiences influenced how the students navigated the process of developing and realizing their postsecondary aspirations.

Postsecondary Aspirations of Chinese and Filipino Youth

The aspirations of the Chinese and Filipino students in this study were similarly disparate as other data suggests. Nearly all of the Chinese American respondents aspired to graduate from a four-year college or university and many talked about long-term goals such as advanced degrees (see Table 2). More than half of the Chinese respondents planned to pursue an advanced degree. Most of the Chinese students were considering a narrow set of colleges, mostly highly selective institutions with strong reputations. The colleges these students were interested in included in-state public and private universities, as well as reputable out-of-state, private institutions. Nearly all of the Chinese students were certain they would receive their bachelor's degree from the institution they would attend after high school.

The Filipino students had a wider range of institutional and degree aspirations than the Chinese students. For example, Filipino students were interested in public schools, such as the Universities of California and California State Universities, and community colleges, but they also mentioned proprietary vocational schools in auto mechanics, computers, or the arts (culinary and performance). Moreover, one-third of the respondents indicated that they would only pursue "some college" (see Table 2). Nearly all of the Filipino respondents were

interested in colleges in California and most were interested in public institutions, with the exception of the students who were interested in the proprietary vocational colleges. Filipinos also were more likely to pursue opportunities such as the military—some seeing it as a means to attend college. A surprisingly large number of Filipino respondents were not sure what they were going to do following high school, some were not even sure that they would graduate from high school.

Because I was interested in the educational process of Chinese and Filipinos, rather than just their educational outcomes, I examined how their high school experiences affected the development of their postsecondary aspirations and planning. Through the student narratives, I found that there were two ways race and ethnicity played a role in the differences in the aspirations of the Chinese and Filipino youth in this study. The first thematic finding was that the racial and ethnic social climate and social relationships were different for Chinese and Filipino students. The second finding was that the racial and ethnic social climate of the schools affected the students' identity, not only racially or ethnically, but also academically, because of the connotations that were attached to their treatment by others. These racial and ethnic experiences played a significant role in students' divergent educational processes and outcomes. The factors as well as the connection among factors are discussed below.

Racial and Ethnic Climate. The Chinese and Filipino students described a variety of ways in which race and ethnicity were factors in how they were treated by teachers, counselors, and peers in their schools. Students from both ethnic groups described overt and covert forms of racial stereotypes that they experienced at school. Although the two ethnic groups had some similar descriptions of the stereotypes that others had of them, in most cases, the perceptions were very different.

Chinese students reported feeling that they were treated as a model minority, with high academic expectations placed on them by teachers and counselors. Many Chinese students explained that because there were positive stereotypes of Chinese Americans in their schools, they were selected by counselors and teachers to enroll in college preparatory academic programs. Their

Table 2
Participant Degree Aspirations

	Number and/or percentage			
	Chinese schools		Filipino schools	
	Wilson HS ($n = 40$)	Kennedy HS ($n = 40$)	Hoover HS ($n = 40$)	Jackson HS ($n = 40$)
Some college	**0** (0%)	**0** (0%)	**12** (30%)	**15** (37%)
B.A./B.S.	**14** (35%)	**16** (40%)	**18** (45%)	**16** (40%)
M.A./M.S./M.S.W./M.P.H./M.B.A	**20** (50%)	**20** (50%)	**8** (20%)	**6** (15%)
M.D./D.D.S./J.D./Ph.D.	**6** (15%)	**4** (10%)	**2** (5%)	**3** (8%)

access to these resources afforded them access to teachers who supported their academic and counseling needs. Teachers would tell the students about different colleges they should consider or what they needed to do to get into different types of colleges. One student said, "My AP teachers have helped me in my college planning. They're the ones that care the most about students. They actually want to help, whereas other teachers don't really care." The teachers in the college preparatory programs often gave specific advice about college. One student explained, "I have an AP teacher that told me, 'Do good now so you don't have to take general education classes in college.' She also told me special dates and deadlines and helped me with my college essay."

Filipino students, on the other hand, felt that they experienced a lot of negative stereotypes from teachers and counselors at school. Many of the Filipino students felt that they were viewed as delinquents or failures. Male Filipino students felt that they were viewed and treated as gang members. Many students felt that they were placed unfairly in vocational courses or classes that would not help them prepare for or get into college. The Filipino students explained that the teachers in vocational courses provided limited advice about college. For example, a Filipino student at Jackson High described how his teacher encouraged him to attend a community college. The student said, "My teachers tell me that it's the same thing. You're being taught the same thing you'll get at a UC; it's just that it's the price that's different." Some Filipino students described how they simply felt that some of their teachers did not care. Filipino students were more likely to say, "Some teachers just don't want to give any good advice. They just basically don't care."

Therefore, the Chinese students were much more likely to be in college preparatory courses that offered instructors who could provide them with information, guidance, and motivation about college. Filipinos, on the other hand, were more likely to indicate that their teachers were uncaring or discouraging about college. For the latter group of students, the discourse they would use to describe their teachers included words like "unavailable," "inaccessible," or "unapproachable."

The Chinese and Filipino students also attended high schools that had different types of counseling programs that affected the accessibility of the counselors for students, as well as the quality, amount, and type of interaction students had with counselors. Counselors at the Chinese schools had programs that were oriented toward college advising, whereas counselors at the Filipino schools had different priorities and did not advise students about their futures beyond high school.

At the Chinese schools, the counseling resources helped them to find information about college. One Chinese student said, "I can go to the college counselor and ask questions about the SATs and ACT, and what should I take to better my chances and stuff like that.

They're helpful." Chinese students described the college centers as an important source of information about college, particularly because their other counselors were often busy. Many Chinese students said that their academic counselors handled their courses and the college center handled anything that had to do with college. One Chinese student described his use of the college center. He said:

> Sometimes I go to the college counseling center and I just talk to them about college, choices I have and stuff like that. They also have all the information—the booklets and fee waivers. They can give you advice because they've gone through that process numerous times.

Some counselors would tell the Chinese students how to strategize to get into different colleges. Most of the Chinese students had a list of colleges they were considering that they were able to derive with the help of their counselors. Many felt that this would help them get into the best school possible for them based on their grades and experiences. One Chinese student explained how his counselor was involved in helping him create his list of possible colleges to consider. He said:

> My college counselor already made a list of colleges for me. Yeah, because that's what she does. She says that I don't have to do anything else to get into Whitman, UC San Diego, UC Riverside, and UC Santa Cruz. But I'm not sure if I'll get into USC or some of the other ones. I don't remember the other ones, but there were only a few public schools and the rest of them were private schools.

The interactions that Filipino students had with counselors were very different. When Filipino students were able to access their counselors, counselors did not focus on college counseling. A Filipino student said, "We don't have a college center, so they come to our classes. Last year, they came and talked to us about prerequisites for college, but mainly they just focused on graduation requirements." Filipinos students described how they would direct questions to their counselors about college, but were unable to get specific feedback that addressed their questions. Many Filipino students felt that they were stigmatized as being "academically unqualified" to attend college. In some cases, they felt that the counselors and teachers had assumptions about the students' family situations and assumed that their parents would not let them attend a college far from home or could not afford college.

Both Chinese and Filipino students expressed that there were negative stereotypes about Asians that they experienced at school. One student explained, "Asians can be made fun of a lot. I hear a lot of jokes about us from other students." These jokes were sometimes very offensive and hurtful to students and had implications for their social relationships with other racial groups.

Although both groups were made fun of because they were Asian, the descriptions of how Chinese and Filipino students were treated by peers based on their ethnicity were very different.

For the Chinese students, a common stereotype that they felt that their peers had of them was that they were high achieving—a model minority. A Chinese student explained, "Some people at school think that just because I'm Chinese, I do really good at math. And then when I don't understand something, then they're in disbelief. It [is] like they cannot believe that I don't understand the math problem." The Chinese students felt that stereotypes of Asians being high achievers also affected the ways that students interacted with them. Some students felt that the perception of Asians as high achievers would often result in people taking advantage of them in class. A Chinese student said:

> People think Asians are all smart. Yeah, they expect more. I experience this at school, especially when I'm working in groups. They expect me to do more stuff. If I'm in a group of people I don't know, they expect me to do more since they know I'm smarter. The students expect more out of me. Sometimes, it seems like they are taking advantage of me.

Filipinos, on the other hand, were more likely to describe the stereotypes they faced from peers as being more negative. A Filipino student said, "There is a stereotype that people have here that all Filipinos are in gangs. Just because I'm bald, I fit the stereotype of being a typical Filipino." Filipino students felt that these stereotypes often caused other non-Filipino students to single them out as troublemakers. One student explained, "I had a couple of students that don't like me here. I don't know if they're racists or not, but it seemed like they are." Another student explained:

> If anything happens at school, automatically they think it's our fault. At this school, they think all of the troublemakers are Asians, Filipinos. I guess they look at the students differently, you know what I'm saying? The Asians are just little hoodlums or something.

Although Chinese and Filipinos had very different experiences regarding how race and ethnicity affected their treatment by teachers, counselors, and peers at school, the experience within each respective ethnic group was not uniform. Both Chinese and Filipinos students felt that teachers, counselors, and their peers would treat Asians differently depending on their perceptions of whether the student was an immigrant. Some students felt that all of the Asians at school were classified and treated as immigrants. One student explained, "The teachers have a different eye when they look at you. They think that just because we're Asians, we're all immigrants and we don't speak English very well. Teachers act different with

us. They have different attitudes with different racial groups."

Both Chinese and Filipino Americans immigrant students felt that among their own ethnic group, they were treated differently because of their immigrant status. A Filipino student explained, "There are Asians who treat me bad because I'm an immigrant. They make fun of me." Often times, immigrant students felt isolated by peers from other racial groups, as well as native-born peers of their own ethnicity. For many of these students, the isolation was also extended by the English as a Second Language (ESL) courses they were required to take.

Therefore, there were different and often contradicting stereotypes that APAs faced in their school contexts. APAs experienced different levels of inclusion and exclusion because of race, ethnicity, gender, and immigration status. Students felt that the various stereotypes they faced had implications for the different types of interactions they experienced with school personnel and peers. This often had implications for the different levels of cooperation and support they received, as well the psychological climate that existed in their schools. The racial climate also had implications for the development of students' racial and ethnic identities.

Identity Formation, Resistance, and Postsecondary Aspirations

The various racialized interactions that occurred in the schools had implications for students' identities. Many of the Chinese Americans were more likely to consider themselves "Asian American." The racial identity as Asian American might have been more closely linked to the Chinese Americans because of their academic success. Moreover, the environment to which Chinese students were exposed sent a signal that they were deserving of the best postsecondary preparation and opportunities. Chinese students often seemed to have a high level of academic self-confidence. Even for Chinese students with low GPAs and low SAT scores, the academic self-confidence level of the students was very high where they would apply to colleges even if they did not meet the minimum academic qualifications.

However, for many Filipinos, the classification of "Asian American" did not seem to fit their identity. One Filipino student explained, "I consider myself to be an Asian American. But some other Asians say, 'Filipinos are not Asian, they don't have characteristics of regular Asians,' I hear that a lot." Filipino students were exposed to a culture that set expectations for failure and delinquency. These signals were sent by teachers and other peers who made it difficult for students to maintain high academic self-confidence. For many of the Filipino students, it seemed difficult for them to trust their teachers and counselors. One student explained that it was difficult for him to trust his counselors because he did not

feel like they cared about him. He explained, "I don't think my counselors care anyway. I mean how could they? There's too many of us for them to care about each and every one of us."

Claude Steele (1997) proposed a theory of "stereotype threat" to explain the effects of stereotyping on African American students' academic underachievement. Stereotype threat refers to the effects of being judged by a stereotype that invokes anxiety and impairs intellectual performance. The Filipino and Chinese students in this study also appeared to face issues of stereotype threat in their schools. However, the stereotypes about the respective groups tended to be very different, thus producing different reactions to their stereotypes.

As discussed earlier, Chinese students faced the stereotype of being overachievers, which raised concern among Chinese for having other students take advantage of them. These students often faced situations where they felt there were higher expectations placed upon them because of their race and ethnicity. Filipino students felt that the stereotypes they faced were related to delinquency, gangs, and low achievement. As a result, the Chinese and Filipino students had different ways in which they reacted to their respective school environments.

For Chinese students, a positive racial and ethnic identity as a model minority was enhanced by favorable resources, guidance, and opportunities at school. However, for Filipino students, conforming to the stereotypes resulted in settling for low expectations presented to them. Thus, for Filipinos to succeed and aspire to goals beyond the level of expectations presented to them, students needed to engage in adaptive behavior. For example, many Filipino students felt that their pursuit of college preparation, information, and guidance had to be self-initiated. For example, one Filipino students said, "At this school, you gotta be a self-starter. You can't rely on your teachers to give you all that information. They tell you a little bit. You got to go out there and find out more." Another student explained:

> I've asked my counselors questions about college but they don't tell me what I need to know. One of them was just telling me, "Go on, son, you know, do your job." Yeah, but I'm gonna keep nagging him to give me information because that's their job—to help out the kids.

In addition to the challenges they face in pursuing information and guidance for college, Filipino students were more likely than Chinese students to be faced with the social realities of violence and gangs. A Filipino student told a chilling story about his run-ins with gangs in his neighborhood:

> Sometimes, gangs try to fight with my friends and me. I will usually run because I don't want any trouble. But sometimes I can't run any more. Sometimes, I have to turn around, drop my stuff, and start fighting. One time,

a guy pulled out like a screwdriver. Got me four times in my arm.

With these interpersonal, psychological, and structural challenges facing Filipino American students at school, achievement and success were not merely a matter of being a "good student." Rather, it involved highly resilient behavior and resistance to the threats and barriers they face every day. On the other hand, Chinese students had different concerns about their Chinese or Asian identity. For example, Chinese students who were pursuing highly selective colleges had a lot of concern about how "being Asian" would affect them when they applied to college. One student explained:

> Sometimes on applications I don't really like feel like putting my race. I don't know why it matters, you know? College admissions should be based on my academic skill and whether or not I live up to their and my expectations, not whether I live up to their quotas. Basically, I end up competing against other Asians. On the other hand, sometimes I think it's important to put it on an application. I wanna be proud to be an Asian American.

Thus, an understanding of the educational experiences and processes for Asian Americans is quite complex and is interrelated with how different APA subpopulations are treated because of their ethnicity and immigration backgrounds. For many of the students, the contradictory messages they received because of their race and ethnicity made it difficult for them to create a positive self-image of their racial and ethnic identities. Particularly for Filipino youth in this study, it was much more common for them to relate to a counterculture, such as hip-hop. Particularly for the male Filipinos, culture such as hip-hop brought them an identity they could embrace that was accepting of them as individuals. These trends were not, however, as common among the Chinese youth or among females, in general.

CONCLUSION

One of the most important aspects of this study was the utility of critical race theory as a guiding framework for examining college opportunities and decision-making processes for different racial groups. In particular, CRT allowed me to examine the nuances and subtleties of race that are less apparent and typically not acknowledged in educational research on different racial and ethnic student populations. I found that deconstructing concepts and perspectives asserted in previous research on APAs was imperative for challenging and deconstructing "traditional" notions of APA students as simply a homogeneous, overachieving model minority. This perspective could be taken only by acknowledging

the intersection of multiple selves in terms of how race and ethnicity, social class, and immigration shaped the lives of APA student populations.

CRT enabled me to conceptualize how the high school experiences of APA youth varied for different ethnic subpopulations. The racialized experiences of Chinese and Filipino youth resulted in different postsecondary information, knowledge, and opportunity. In addition, how students coped with and navigated through these racial experiences also varied.

From a social justice perspective, critical race theory also enabled me to uncover the susceptibility and vulnerability of supposed resilient model minorities to inequality and oppression in school contexts. The social and institutional contexts were particularly important to examine because of their ability to create or undermine the social mobility for students. For example, school agents were actually gatekeepers with the responsibility and authority to make decisions about the distribution of scarce resources and limited opportunities. Chinese students were more likely to be exposed to a systematic channel of resources, programming, support, and encouragement that was conducive for students to attend the more selective colleges and universities. However, Filipino students were more likely to be exposed to expectations, support, and tracking that would guide them toward limited opportunities at best. Often, the decisions around who deserves what kind of information and encouragement were a result of institutionalized racial stereotypes and illusive discriminatory practices.

There are implications for theory and practice that emerged from this study. In terms of theory and scholarship, CRT allowed me to demonstrate that within the APA population, there is striking diversity of educational opportunity with regard to ethnicity and immigration status. APA subpopulations experience different educational and social conditions, which create different contexts in which students negotiate their educational processes and outcomes. Studies of race and ethnicity in education must acknowledge the diversity of the APA population as well as the social and institutional realities in order to understand the educational experiences and outcomes of the APA population.

These findings have implications for how race and ethnicity are examined in college-choice research. This study demonstrates that although APAs may share some similarities with other racial and ethnic populations in how they pursue the college-choice process, the diversity among APA ethnic populations should yield attention to the range of experiences and conditions in which they pursue higher education. For example, college choice research should acknowledge the role that racialized and immigrant experiences play in the postsecondary pursuits of students of color, differences that are further compounded by gender or social and economic class.

The findings from this study also have implications for the methodological approach to the study of APAs in education. CRT was instrumental in providing a voice for students who are otherwise not heard, thus allowing students to provide their own perspectives on their educational experiences. However, this method imposed some limitations as well. Although this study was qualitative, the analysis was designed to be more comparative across APA ethnic subpopulations, rather than in-depth on either one. Qualitative studies should look more closely within subpopulations to examine experiences that may be even subtler than what I was able to capture. For example, in this study, among the Chinese American participants who were immigrants, there was a great deal of variation as to their national origin before coming to the U.S. For example, nearly three-quarters of the immigrants (72%) were born outside of mainland China (33% were born in Hong Kong, 22% in Taiwan, 6% in Southeast Asia, and 6% in South America). The social conditions and lifestyles that families experience across these different regions or nations may produce differences in the educational experiences of youth when they arrive in the U.S.

The findings also have implications for educational policy and practice. First, educational policies in all sectors of the educational spectrum need to recognize that APA students do not necessarily have the same educational experiences and outcomes. Rather, policy makers need to reevaluate how they include and treat APAs because of the great deal of diversity (ethnicity, class, immigrant status, language, and religious background, to name only a few) that has been masked by aggregated racial perspectives.

In conclusion, as much as educational theory and practice continues to treat the APA population as "invisible Americans," their size, growth, and inter-group diversity demand closer attention. Scholars and policymakers must be precise in their attempts to conceptualize the educational experiences and opportunities that exist for APAs. In particular, educational practioners should be aware of the social and institutional realities that yield differences in the educational experiences and outcomes of ethnic and immigrant populations among Asian Pacific American students.

NOTES

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2. In this article, the terms Asian American and Asian Pacific American are used interchangeably.

3. This analysis of the data focuses on racial formation of Chinese and Filipino students. Although the sample includes

female as well as male respondents, and although CRT includes attention to gender intersections with race, ethnicity, and class distinctions, this analysis does not note gender variability in student responses.

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