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Asian Americans and Education

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Summary and Keywords

The communities that constitute the racialized category of Asian Americans consist of approximately 20 million people in the United States, or about 5% of the total population. About 20% or 4 million are of primary or secondary school age, and over 1.1 million are in higher education. Both in popular and academic discourse, “Asian American” generally refers to people who have ethnic backgrounds in South Asia (e.g., Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka), Southeast Asia (e.g., Cambodia, the Philippines, Thailand, Vietnam), and East Asia (e.g., China, Japan, Korea, Taiwan). As “Asian American” is an umbrella term used to categorize a very diverse, heterogeneous, and transnational set of populations, Asian Americans as a group present various challenges to education and research in and about the United States. These challenges can concern paradigms of achievement, citizenship, family involvement, access (e.g., higher education, bilingual education), language and culture, race and ethnicity, and school community.

In order to address these paradigmatic challenges, a great deal of scholarship has called for a disaggregation of the data on populations that fall under the pan-ethnic “Asian America” umbrella term, to gain a more nuanced and dynamic understanding of the many diverse populations and their historical, cultural, economic, and political experiences. To further address the problematic framing of Asian Americans in education and related fields, scholars have applied critical lenses to key tensions within conceptualization, policy, curriculum, and pedagogy. More recently, the notions of intersectionality and transnationalism have been generative in the study of Asian Americans, within not only educational research but also Asian American studies, which generally falls under the field of ethnic studies in the U.S. context, but has also been categorized under American studies, cultural studies, or Asian studies. While characterizations of Asian Americans as “the Model Minority” or “the Oppressed Minority” persist, the relevance of such static binaries has increasingly been challenged as the Asian American populations and migrations continue to diversify and increase.

Introduction

The 21st century has been labeled by some as “The Asian Century,” which anticipates the rise of Asian nations in economic, cultural, and political dominance. Indeed the People’s Republic of China has already evolved into one of the world’s superpowers, with a massive amount of access, migration, and investment into U.S. markets and other institutions, including the education sector. As various forms of capital and people continue to flow into the United States, Asian Americans have usually claimed the designation of fastest-growing racial group in the United States (Paik, Kula, Saito, Rahman, & Witenstein, 2014). This can be indicated by the U.S. Census’s statistics of 1.5 million Asian Americans in 1970, 7 million in 1990, and 19.4 million in 2013. With these numbers, and a significant presence in areas ranging from pop culture to politics, and e-commerce to education, Asian Americans are receiving considerable attention in popular and academic discourse. Yet despite this growth and visibility, there is a significant amount of tension and disparity in and across the groups that fall under the monolithic term of “Asian American.”

Within the sociopolitical landscape of the United States and its racialization of ethnic groups, there are generally five racialized groups: Latina/o, Black, white, Asian, and indigenous peoples (Omi & Winant, 1994). While there are different nomenclatures (e.g., African American, Caucasian, Hispanic, Oriental, Native American), subgroups, and controversies associated with these racializations, they play a significant role in the ongoing general discourse of the United States. As with the other racialized groups, “Asian American” is an umbrella category composed of vast and diverse peoples. Although immigrants from Asia have been present in what is now the United States for over 300 years (Cordova, 1983), they did not arrive in larger numbers until the mid-1800s. Since that time, ebbs and flows of Asian immigration have been related to factors such as colonization, imperialism, globalization, and political economy. Within the popular, academic, and governmental discourse in North America, there are several subgroups from different parts of Asia that are considered Asian American. These include those that are referred to as being from South Asia (e.g., Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka), Southeast Asia (e.g., Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Philippines, Thailand, Vietnam), and East Asia (e.g., China, Japan, Korea, Taiwan). In some instances, peoples from the Pacific Islands (e.g., Guam, Hawaii, Samoa) or West Asia (e.g., Iran, Iraq), are included under the even broader umbrella term Asian Pacific Islander (API) or Asian American Pacific Islander (AAPID). In addition, to distinguish the presence and experiences of South Asians (sometimes referred to as “Desis”), the term “Asian Pacific Islander Desi American” (APIDA) has also been utilized in recent years (S. Shankar, 2011). Here, “Asian American” will refer to those of South, Southeast, and East Asian background living in

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the United States, which aligns with the U.S. Census. Although they share some common experiences, Pacific Islanders are not grouped together with Asians here, given the distinct histories and conditions of indigenous peoples from the Pacific Islands, which are usually quite disparate from Asian peoples, including those who migrated to and settled in the same Pacific Islands (B. Chang & Au, 2008; Labrador & Wright, 2011).

Key demographic features of the Asian American community with regards to education will be discussed. The demographics discussion will be used as a springboard for looking at the naming and typologies of the diverse communities considered to be a part of “Asian America.” Several key tensions within the realm of education with Asian American groups will be examined, particularly around conceptualizations, policy, and pedagogy related to educational equity. This focus on conceptualizations and equity is informed by critical and intersectional scholarship that critiques some of the existing paradigms of research on Asian Americans and education that tend to frame the scholarship through a straight line of historical progress, or a one-by-one analysis of each ethnic subgroup. Suggestions are presented on generative areas of research and pedagogy to address key themes and tensions raised.

Demographics and Naming of Asian America

Key Demographics

Some of the years of the sources of the demographic information pertinent to issues of Asian Americans and education vary, as not all relevant statistical information is collected or available each year, such as with the U.S. Census taken every 10 years, or the American Community Survey (ACS), which is conducted annually but with limited areas of data. In some instances, data from before 2010 are cited, but these are usually in the context of an academic article that names trends still pertinent to the conditions of education emphasized. Aside from providing a quantitative snapshot of Asian Americans, the data also serve to illustrate how diverse and disparate “Asian American” subgroups can be. The data point to the urgent need of clearly and consistently disaggregating data on Asian Americans in an effort to debunk flawed and stereotypical discourse found across scholarship, policies, and pedagogy.

According to the 2013 ACS, approximately 19.4 million of the United States’ total 320 million residents were categorized as Asian American (U.S. Census Bureau, 2013A). The six largest Asian American ethnic subgroups were those who indicated they were of the following descent: Chinese (4.3 million, not including Taiwanese), Filipina/o (3.6 million), Asian Indian (3.5 million), Vietnamese (1.9 million), Korean (1.8 million), and Japanese (1.4 million). Other large subgroups included Pakistani (409,000), Cambodian (276,000), Hmong (260,000), Thai (237,000), Laotian (232,000), Taiwanese (230,000), Bangladeshi (147,000), and Burmese (100,000). Of the 19.4 million who indicated they were Asian American, the number includes those who stated they were at least partly of Asian heritage from one or more of 24 possible ethnic groups subsumed under the Asian American umbrella. In addition, the Census reported that more than 15% of Asian Americans indicated they were of “mixed race” heritage (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012), also known as “Hapa” in some contexts. More than 60% were born outside of the United States, the largest of any racialized group.

The 10 states with the largest Asian American populations, and their approximate number as of the 2013 ACS, were California (6.1 million), New York (1.8 million), Texas (809,000), New Jersey (743,400), Illinois (592,000), Florida (547,000), Hawaii (531,000), Washington (516,300), Massachusetts (455,000), and Pennsylvania (358,000). Some three-quarters of Asian Americans reported living in urban areas, and the 10 highest concentrations of Asian Americans were living, respectively, in the general metro areas of Los Angeles–Orange County (about 1.9 million); New York–New Jersey; San Francisco–Oakland; San Jose; Chicago; Washington, D.C.; Honolulu; Seattle–Tacoma; Houston; and Dallas–Fort Worth (about 342,000). In popular discourse, using the term “urban areas” populated by Asian Americans may stir the image of low-income ethnic enclaves like

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inner-city Chinatowns; however; there are also large numbers living in suburbs of the metro areas just listed (J. S. Lai, 2011; Saito, 1998).

The median age of Asian Americans was 36.3, with the national median at 37.5; 21.1% were under the age of 18, while 10% were 65 or older (U.S. Census Bureau, 2013B). Linguistically, over 71% of Asian Americans over the age of five speak a language other than English at home. The 2013 ACS shows that the Census categorizes languages in one of four groups, namely *Spanish, Other Indo-European Languages, Asian and Pacific Island Languages*, and *All Other Languages*. This creates something of an issue when extracting particular language data for Asian Americans, as Hindi, Gujarati, Punjabi, and Urdu are separated from *Asian and Pacific Island Languages*. Nevertheless, some statistics can be determined, including the following on languages most frequently used in households: Chinese (2.38 million, not disaggregated for dialect), Tagalog (1.44 million), Vietnamese (1.2 million), Korean (1.04 million), Hindi (527,000), Japanese (458,000), Urdu (326,000), Gujarati (304,000), Punjabi (210,000), Bengali (188,000), Mon-Khmer or Cambodian (185,000), Hmong (182,000), Telugu (171,000), Laotian (148,000), Thai (142,000), Tamil (133,000), Malayalam (117,000), Formosan (76,800), Ilocano (75,000), and Indonesian (58,000).

One Asian American demographic that is rather under-researched is sexual orientation and gender (Kumashiro, 1999; Ocampo & Soodjinda, 2016). While national data are not widely available, the first of such large-scale studies looked at over 860 participants from 38 states, with the sample's geographic representation matching the national demographic of Asian Americans in general (Dang & Vianney, 2007). Among the study's participants, 10% identified as transgender, 41% as women, and 53% as men. Participants who indicated woman or man and one of the transgender identities were tabulated in both categories. Of the participants, 9% self-identified as bisexual, 19% as lesbian, 20% as queer, and 47% as gay, with women being more than twice as likely as men to identify as queer. Some 75% of participants reported being discriminated against for their sexual orientation, and 86% reported racial or ethnic discrimination.

For the 2013 ACS, the median income for Asian American households was \$72,400, while the U.S. median was \$51,900. It should be noted that this seemingly higher median for Asian Americans may be misleading, as Asian American households tend to have more members than the median. It should also be noted that there are wide disparities across subgroups, including in areas such as ethnicity and class or socioeconomic status (E. Lai & Arguelles, 2003). For example, in 2013 the median income for Asian Indian households was \$100,500, while it was \$51,300 for Bangladeshi homes, thus indicating high disparity within the Asian American umbrella, and the South Asian subgroup. The poverty rate for Asian Americans was 12.7%, compared to a national median of 14.5%. Again, however, statistics tell a different story when disaggregated for ethnic groups. For example, 15.4% of Cambodian Americans reported living in poverty in the United States, with a rate of 28% in New York City (CAAAV, 2011).

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Regarding primary and secondary schools, there are approximately 2.56 million Asian American students in attendance, or about 4% of the total number of K-12 students in the 2013 ACS. There are about 28,000 Asian American teachers, which is around 1% of the U.S. teaching force, although the number of Asian American teachers continues to decrease, similar to other communities of color (Philip, 2012; Rong & Preissle, 1997). Some 86.6% of the U.S. population over 25-years-old were indicated as having a high school diploma, with Asian Americans slightly less at 86.2%. However, there were significant disparities across ethnic groups, with over 94% of Taiwanese and Japanese Americans having a high school degree, while Laotian and Hmong Americans were under 66%.

Language use and needs in education are a bit challenging to determine, as the data are categorized inconsistently. For example, the 2009 National English Language Learner Status data do not distinguish between Asians and Pacific Islanders (National Center for Education Statistics, 2009). Thus, the statistic that holds that 16% of Asian *and* Pacific Islander Americans are English language learners and should therefore be receiving support in schools, although appropriate support has long appeared to be an issue (Olsen, 1997; Redondo, 2008). Appropriate support also appears to be an issue in terms of Asian American special needs students. Similar to many Latina/o and Black students, mislabeling of Asian American students as “special needs” can occur when the issues are more related to language, poverty, racism, parent involvement, inappropriate support, and other factors (J. M. Chang & Liu, 1998; Poon-McBrayer, 2011). As with the two larger communities of color in the United States, Asian American males are much more likely to be placed in special education (over 70%), than females. However, unlike Latina/o and Black student communities, Asian Americans are underrepresented in special education (Lo, 2008), which seems to be more about underreporting than the fulfillment of the Model Minority stereotype of Asian Americans. Some statistics show that Chinese, Indian, Korean, and Vietnamese students make up the majority of Asian Americans in special education (Doan, 2006). However, other than Filipina/os, it should be noted that those groups are also the largest Asian American ethnic subgroups, which may affect the findings.

Levels of education have been discussed by many as a reason to support the discourse around Asian Americans as the Model Minority in some form (Center, 2013; Covarrubias & Liou, 2014). ACS 2013 data show that 21.6% of Asian Americans 25 and older had a master’s degree or higher, and 51.3% had a bachelor’s degree or higher. These statistics are notable considering the respective national averages of 11.2% and 29.6%. In terms of attendance at higher education institutions, Asian Americans have been portrayed as “taking over” university campuses (M. J. Chang, 2008; Teranishi, 2010), especially at elite institutions. In reality, the increases in total higher education attendance mirror those of other racialized groups between 1987 and 2004, with 1.1 million Asian Americans, 1.8 Latina/os, and 2.2 African Americans (CARE, 2008). The same data show some two-thirds of Asian Americans concentrated at 200 campuses in eight states, with the majority being at public institutions, and an even distribution across four-year and the generally open-enrollment two-year schools. For fields of study, despite the stereotype of Asian

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Americans focusing on STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) subjects, there were about 29% majors in business, 26% in social science and humanities, 22% in engineering, 14% in education, and 9% in health or life sciences.

When looking across education data in general on the Asian American umbrella group, it can be observed that the numbers tell a different story than that of the Model Minority that is often narrated in the popular discourse. When disaggregated across class, ethnicity, immigration, and other categories, the numbers present much more complex narratives. Indeed, a clarion call across scholarship on Asian Americans and education is the disaggregation of Asian American groups, toward better understanding and addressing the issues and moving toward greater educational equity (Ng, Lee, & Pak, 2007). Although there has been relatively little discussion of inter-group differences in the popular media since the “Model Minority” was coined in 1966 (Wang, 2008), an assemblage of tensions and disparities between Asian American subgroups has been addressed for several decades in fields such as ethnic, cultural, and Asian American studies, as well as spaces of political organizations and community groups (Ali, 2016; Chin, 1971; Omatsu, 1986; A. Ong, 1995).

History and Politics of Naming

Although *Asian American* is the official term of the U.S. Census, there are numerous ways Asian Americans are referred to within education and related areas like social services, NGOs, and community agencies and scholarship that addresses Asian American populations, like cultural studies, ethnic studies, and Asian American studies. A partial list of names used would include Asian, Asian American, Asian Pacific American (APA), Asian Pacific Islander American (APIA), and Asian Pacific Islander Desi American (APIDA), with other variations that call for the removal of “American” at the end of the term, or the inclusion or exclusion of hyphens (e.g., Asian Pacific Islander, Asian-American). The term *Asian American* was actually not used widely until the late 1960s. During the preceding 100 years, as the total Asian population came to number in the thousands, Asian groups were framed more by their nationalities (e.g., Japanese, Filipino), and were racialized differently (e.g., Chinese as Mongol, Indian as Aryan or Caucasian) (Prashad, 2000; Takaki, 1998). These disparities were often tied to the United States’ engagements with foreign Asian nation-states such as in the Philippine American War (1899–1902), as well as in domestic experiences within the United States like the Chinese Exclusion Act (1882) and the mass incarceration of Japanese Americans (World War II). Other factors that served to divide Asian groups in the United States were linked to histories between their home nation-states, such as Japanese imperialism in China, Korea, and the Philippines, and the multiple divisions of the Indian subcontinent into Pakistan, Bangladesh, India, and other states.

Moving Toward the “Asian American” Umbrella

By the late 1960s, the conceptualization of Asian Americans as a group was catalyzed by several factors, including U.S. wars with Korea and Vietnam, the civil rights movement, the 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act, and Third World liberation movements around the world by peoples of color against their colonial rulers (Kochiyama, 2004; Liu, Geron, & Lai, 2008). More specifically, these developments helped consolidate an Asian American identity through framing Asians as the enemy in war, categorizing Asians as a U.S. minority group (along with blacks, Latina/os, and American Indians), enabling unprecedented numbers of educated and middle-class Asians and their families to immigrate into the country, and challenging the notion of whites as the saviors and leaders of peoples of color. These domestic and international factors helped to push diverse Asian populations together in the United States, even if they did not see themselves in the same light. Although the umbrella term and identity of “Asian American” began to be used more widely during the late 1960s, it was not yet the common term, as it was associated more with radical politics and activism. Popularly attributed to Japanese American scholar-activist Yuji Ichioka (Leong, 2002), the term “Asian American” was an identity of resistance that challenged the framing of Asian peoples as the Oriental, the binary opposite to white and European peoples as the Occidental. In this grand narrative of history and civilization, Orientals were the exotic, the uncouth, the “Yellow Peril,” and “The Other,” while Occidentals were the civilized, the beautiful, the intelligent, the enlightened, and the standard (A. M. Y. Lin, 2012; Luke, 2009). Given this narrative, whether white Americans were in the role of missionary, statesman, entrepreneur, soldier, or teacher, the duty was to “save the Asian races,” as almost an extension of the “Go West” and Manifest Destiny ideology (Palumbo-Liu, 1999; Pascoe, 1990). As a challenge to these notions of a white supremacy, Asian activists in the United States during the 1960s saw the Asian American identity as one that aligned itself with other peoples of color in the United States and Third World peoples abroad, who sought to challenge white hegemony and its teachings and preachings of “minorities” having to reject their sociocultural backgrounds in order to assimilate toward whiteness (Aguirre & Lio, 2008). These notions were directly connected to the Third World liberation movements in the United States (e.g., American Indian Movement, Asian American Movement) and their related calls for community-based ethnic studies (e.g., black studies, Asian American studies) that caught international attention in 1968 (J. P. Chan et al., 2009; Maeda, 2009).

Since the late 1960s, “Asian American” has come to be widely used and institutionalized. While some factors that urged Asians to the pan-ethnic term have significantly changed, it continues as a salient term and grouping. In studying the propagation of Asian American pan-ethnicity during the 1970s and 1980s, Espiritu cited culture, emotion, economy, and politics as major factors, with examples including anti-Asian violence, electoral representation, and social service funding (1992). This development of the Asian American pan-ethnic identity has brought substantial benefits to communities affiliated with it, including greater socioeconomic and political clout (Geron, de la Cruz, Saito, & Singh, 2001; D. G. Okamoto, 2006). Yet despite such factors that provide the impetus for

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Asians to come together and identify under the umbrella, there are also numerous factors that disrupt it. The historical divisions between Asian groups and their nation-states have already been alluded to, such as Japan's imperialism and wartime atrocities across Asia. Another example of historical nation-state divisions that are still relevant is the diversity of groups in Taiwan, such as the aboriginals, the Chinese who lived in Taiwan for many generations, the more recent Chinese who fled their country's civil war to Taiwan, and the Nationalist Party elite who also fled mainland China but took control of Taiwan in the 1940s. While many of those who can trace their aboriginal ancestry do not come to the United States, members of the other three groups have been doing so for decades. In terms of education, the identities, practices, and schooling pathways of Taiwanese American students can be highly correlated to which groups in Taiwan their families came from, such as the Nationalist Party elite or the engineers and doctoral students who came to the United States via the 1965 Immigration Act (Glenn & Yap, 2000; Louie, 2004). The children of such families enter the U.S. educational system with significant amounts of economic, social, and cultural capital whether they are first generation (born outside of the United States) or second generation (born in the United States to immigrant parents). These types of students are often spotlighted in support of the high-achieving Model Minority Myth (MMM) of Asian Americans (S. J. Lee, 2009). Contrary to the MMM, students of working-class Taiwanese origin that are 1.5 generation (those who immigrate at a young age) may not have the capital of the aforementioned groups, and may engage in self-defeating forms of resistance whether in Queens, New York, or the San Gabriel Valley in Los Angeles (B. Chang, 2015A; Ta, 2005). Despite the significant differences in backgrounds and pathways of these groups of students, their diversity may be masked when lumped together as Taiwanese Americans, or perhaps Chinese Americans more broadly and Asian Americans in general.

Further Disruptions under the Umbrella

Aside from longstanding historical divisions related to the nation-states that different Asian Americans come from, there are also developments within the United States that serve to disrupt the unitary identity and construct of Asian America. One development is the predominance of East Asians over South and Southeast Asians within the popular and academic discourse, which may largely omit South Asians from the discussion (L. D. Shankar & Srikanth, 1998). An instance of this is when a characteristic can be found somewhat applicable to Chinese, Japanese, or Korean Americans (e.g., Confucianism-inspired practices), it is portrayed as the norm for all other Asian Americans despite their immense differences. A specific example can be found with students of Korean heritage. While behaviors and interventions summarily assigned to all Korean American students, teachers, and families is problematic within itself (Lew, 2007), it presents an even larger issue when applied to other Asian Americans. What makes this issue more complex in addressing is the reification of these problematic tropes by some Asian Americans onto the rest of the umbrella group's communities. A pop culture example includes viral videos on YouTube about things "Asian Americans" supposedly do, created by East Asian Americans (Bros, 2013). In educational scholarship we may not see such blatant generalizations, but at times publications with titles and keywords that denote "Asian American" may be more about specific groups, most commonly East Asians or sometimes Southeast Asians (J. A. Gordon, 2000; Zhang, 2003). There are sometimes disclaimers about the focus, sample, and limitations of the studies, but an unintended result may be the continued lumping and homogenizing of Asian American issues by readers and in the greater discourse. At times the use of these frameworks and representations are defended in terms of numbers, whether that is the longer length of the time that East Asians have been in the United States, their larger populations, or the more numerous policies and historical sources that address them (Odo, 2002; Tamura, 2001). An example of this can be found with curriculum about Asian Americans that follows "traveling spotlight" or add-on approaches (Davé et al., 2000). These approaches may attempt to spotlight various subgroups during parts of a semester, but as they tend to follow chronology or readily available literature, the overall pedagogy still tends to reify East Asians as the primary actors, with others added in almost supplementary roles.

Issues of region with ethnic subgroups may also skew scholarship and pedagogy on Asian Americans. Echoing the previously mentioned "by-the-numbers" approach, certain ethnic groups have come to overshadow others within the same region. For example, there tends to be more scholarship and dialogue on Vietnamese Americans when addressing Southeast Asia, and more on Indian Americans when it comes to South Asia. As might be expected with the largest Asian American ethnic group, Chinese Americans tend to have the lion's share of emphasis when it comes to East Asia, as well as Asian Americans in general. Aside from ethnic subgroups, parts of the United States enjoy a certain hegemony when it comes to Asian Americans. In an effort to disrupt the hegemony of the Golden State, the term "East of California" was coined within Asian American studies (Sumida, 1998) to draw attention to how the conditions and experiences of people in California are not representative of those from other states and regions. Finally, the

paucity of scholarship on “mixed” or “Hapa” Americans who have Asian ancestry also interrupts the conceptualization, naming, and pedagogies for the pan-ethnic Asian American project that is largely constructed around static and singular notions of race and ethnicity (B. Chang, 2013; Harris, 2016).

The purpose of examining the naming of Asian Americans, especially around issues of ethnicity, region, and nationality, is to illuminate how important issues can be masked and homogenized by nomenclature and typology (Jain & Turner, 2011), whether it is within a nation like “Taiwan,” a region like “South Asia,” or a race like “Asian American.” In other words, if one simply asks “What are the educational issues of Asian Americans?” he or she may very well be given an answer that really pertains to only one subgroup but is essentialized to all. Ultimately these disparities are not solely relevant to identity politics, but they also concretely materialize as issues of social and educational inequity. As with other groupings of peoples, how Asian America is named and categorized affects the operations of government and private support, as well as educational scholarship and practice (Kiang, 2004; Kwon, 2013). If research on Asian Americans has largely been on Chinese and East Asians, or students in California and New York, subsequent approaches to educational issues will be biased toward characteristics of those subgroups although they are supposedly for the entire racialized group; the end result is that some subgroups may be left behind. Examples of these effects can be found in how public funding is allocated for staffing at social service agencies, or how multi-million-dollar funding agendas are established at private philanthropic corporations, which are increasingly important to schools and community organizations in the neoliberal economy and model of school management (Lipman, 2011; D. Okamoto & Gast, 2013). More specifically, how Asian Americans and other groups are categorized and named can affect the agendas of national research bodies that steer the research agendas of scholars and universities. On a more local level of practice, it may influence the training of school personnel and how they identify and designate children’s linguistic or special education needs (Jo & Rong, 2003).

Some of the diversity among Asian American subgroups, such as Indian and Bangladeshi Americans, has been identified and several convergent and divergent pathways for Asian American groups were explored, to put forth some of the benefits and disadvantages of the Asian American umbrella term. In taking a step back it can be observed that the lumping of Asian American groups together is problematic, given the tremendous diversity of subgroups that becomes hidden. As with Mexican for Latina/os, and perhaps Cherokee for native peoples of the United States, Chinese, Vietnamese, and other dominant subgroups have often come to be representative of Asian Americans. These conceptualizations have material consequences for the umbrella and its subgroups, ranging from the development of teacher preparation to the accumulation of political power. While the conceptualization of race and ethnicity of all groups in the United States is highly problematic in general, Asian Americans lack some of the more unifying traits or experiences that other racialized groups may share, such as the trans-Atlantic slave trade for African Americans, genocide for Native Americans, or the Spanish language for most

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of those categorized as Hispanic Americans. In an effort to develop a more dynamic conceptualization of Asian Americans within education, some of the major approaches to how Asian American education has been theorized and studied will be outlined.

Key Tensions within Education

Existing Conceptualizations

Within the racial typology of Black, white, Latina/o, Native, or Asian in the United States, a plethora of issues occur if the objective is to at least somewhat accurately name and categorize large groups of people, such as the 19.4 million under the Asian American banner. In order to address such numbers and diversity, many of the first book-length volumes that looked at Asian Americans across education tended to be conceptualized along lines of ethnicity or general issues thought to affect Asian Americans as a whole (Nakanishi & Nishida, 1995; Pang & Cheng, 1998; C. C. Park & Chi, 1999). These publications represented some of the earlier empirical education scholarship on and by Asian American scholars. This research was commonly arranged by age or theme (e.g., language, achievement), which came with the hefty task of trying to generalize across the many different ethnicities. Other works looked at ethnic subgroups under the Asian American umbrella, such as Korean or Japanese, and then sections on Southeast Asians (sometimes disaggregated), and perhaps Pacific Islanders (Weinberg, 1997); it was not unusual for these works to scarcely discuss or omit issues of South Asians, gender, and sexual orientation. Popular conceptual frameworks among this educational research on Asian Americans included multiculturalism, cultural difference, and learning styles (Cheng, Ima, & Labovitz, 1994; Chuong, 1994; C. C. Park, 1997).

Since the late 20th century, research on Asian Americans and education has become more interdisciplinary and influenced by critical, postmodern, sociocultural, and postcolonial theories that critique previous scholarship on culture and education as being too static, essentializing, or positivistic (Goodwin, 2010; C. D. Lee, 2001). While there continues to be scholarship that focuses on specific Asian ethnic groups, the types of data, theory, and pedagogy are more eclectic, and analysis of Asian Americans as one group is frequently approached with a certain amount of tentativeness along with the previously discussed calls for data disaggregation. These perspectives draw from the significant scholarship across humanities and social science disciplines, which includes those that critically study race, ethnicity, and difference in the United States, including with Asian American groups (Espiritu, 1992; hooks, 2000; Lowe, 1996; Matsuda, 1991; Okihiro, 2001; Omi & Winant, 1994; Said, 1978). These approaches vary greatly, including some that address the markedly different experiences and epistemologies of indigenous peoples, and their implications for Asian Americans (Saranillio, 2013). But all of the aforementioned lines of scholarship critically problematize the construction of race and ethnicity and their varied roots in colonialism, imperialism, capitalism, and white supremacy by Europe and the United States. When applied to Asian Americans, this scholarship can help untangle some of the

issues related to the umbrella group's problems of naming and conceptualization, and how they are applied to education and social justice.

Oppressed Minority Framing

Of the various frames that have been used to conceptualize research on Asian Americans and education, there are two that have been most dominant: the "Oppressed Minority" and the "Model Minority." Both frames pre-date the upsurge of sociocultural, postmodern, and critical research since the late 20th century, but both frames also continue to be influential. There are variations of the "Oppressed Minority." However, the general premise is that Asian Americans are generally immigrants or the children of immigrants who had to leave their homelands, often because of American or European oppression, to seek a better life in another country. There is a certain irony noted in some of the "Oppressed Minority" scholarship, as immigrants, such as those from Asia, end up in the same countries that played a major hand in dismantling their homeland's government and economy (Viola, 2009). Upon arriving and residing in the United States, Asian Americans are a minority that has been historically and institutionally oppressed, much like other minority groups, and particularly people of color. While there have usually been more well-off individuals among Asians who come to the United States, the "Oppressed Minority" frame tends to speak of those with economic privilege as a minority and focuses on working-class communities. The "Oppressed Minority" is a powerful narrative that speaks to the experiences of millions of Asian Americans that spans two centuries, whether as mine or railroad workers in the mid-1800s, agricultural and cannery workers in the early 1900s, post-Vietnam War refugees after the 1960s, and present-day low-wage laborers whose family members may or may not be documented (Low, 1982; Singh, 2008; Um, 2015). The "Oppressed Minority" frame is commonly invoked to couch arguments, theories, and policies regarding Asian Americans in general, including issues of education. As might be expected, issues of oppression and various "-isms" (e.g., sexism, classism, racism) are a common part of the liberal, progressive, and radical lexicon on Asian Americans, and are used to weave Asian American communities within the larger fabric of U.S. history and the struggle for civil and human rights of minorities, immigrants, refugees, and other marginalized populations (Au & Brown, 2014; Howard, 2010; Kurashige, 2008).

Model Minority Framing

The other part of the duo that often frames Asian Americans and education is the “Model Minority.” Perhaps the most dominant topic within research on Asian Americans in general, the “Model Minority” has been well-documented and studied for some 30 years. The basic premise holds that the Asian minority group has somehow been able to adapt and achieve well within the U.S. system, particularly within education, which is popularly held up alongside hard work as the key to upward mobility. Key interpretations here would include “the American Dream” and the adage of all Americans being able to “pull one’s self up by the bootstraps” to join the middle class or even the rich (Apple, 2006; Yu, 2006). This rather simple conceptualization has had tremendous implications for education, politics, social services, and other areas (Beam, Casabianca, & Chen, 2011). One implication of the “Model Minority” is the notion that the U.S. educational system works (i.e., it is a true meritocracy), and thus does not need substantial reform or overhaul. A second implication is that the “Model Minority” Asian Americans are not really in need of educational accommodations, services, funding, or policy reform. A third implication is that if there is a “Model Minority” then there must be other minorities (e.g., Latina/os) who are not adapting and achieving, and thus perhaps there is something at fault or in deficit with those groups instead of the system. A fourth implication is that Asians must be doing something right to be able to achieve highly, and thus there must be something within their “culture” that is able to be emulated, especially for other minorities who are not doing as well. While there are other implications of the “Model Minority,” the four listed begin to unveil the highly problematic consequences of the frame when it is perpetuated, generalized, and acted upon as truth, including by Asian Americans who adhere to and benefit from its propagation. Various scholarship has examined how the “Model Minority Myth” (MMM) came about in popular news media during the mid-1960s, not long after the incarceration of Japanese Americans (James, 1987; Shimabukuro, 2016), amid U.S. wars in Korea and Vietnam (Prashad, 2007), and also domestic and international struggles for justice often led by peoples of color challenging the white establishment (Elbaum, 2002). Research literature in education and other disciplines have analyzed how the MMM frame has served as a sociopolitical wedge that divides interest groups who may otherwise collaborate to push for change (B. Chang & Au, 2008; Poon et al., 2015), such as in high-stakes testing, school board or labor union elections, diverse curriculum, bilingual education, and university admissions. In looking across educational scholarship that addresses the “Model Minority,” while there is research that seems to support the frame across Asian America and its subgroups, more of the literature seeks to critique and demystify the MMM.

Although the two frames of “Oppressed Minority” and “Model Minority” can be held up as binary opposites, they are not mutually exclusive and have been tied to one another in analyzing Asian American issues. For example, conservative and neoliberal discourse may sometimes utilize parts of the “Oppressed Minority” frame. These are often used to defend the idea that Asian Americans are the “Model Minority,” as “they” came from such difficult backgrounds but were able to succeed once in U.S. society and schools. Although both frames are commonly employed by Asian Americans themselves, these frames can

be refuted as generalizations that essentialize or overlook large sections of the heterogeneity within the Asian American monolith. The “Model Minority frame” is somewhat simpler to challenge here, as there are clearly large sections of students within dominant ethnic subgroups who do not fit the high-achieving stereotype. The “Oppressed Minority” frame requires a bit more examination, as it has been applicable to Asian Americans in many contexts, including education, the law, and social movements. In terms of conceptualization, the “Oppressed Minority” frame fit well with much of the thought that highly influenced those who considered themselves Asian Americans and part of the Asian American movement struggles from the 1960s to 1980s. These ideas included Marxism-Leninism-Maoism, the work of Frantz Fanon, the legacy of the Black Panther Party, and elements of Malcolm X and even Martin Luther King’s approaches to dissent and community organizing (Ho, 2000; Kelley, 2002). It should be noted here that African American experiences and epistemologies were foundational to the “Oppressed Minority” framing and how Asian Americans approached issues of equity and justice (Lam, 2015; Pulido, 2006).

Scholarship on Asian Americans that was concerned with social issues also often utilized neo-Marxist and critical approaches that fit neatly with the “Oppressed Minority” frame (Kwong, 2001; Takagi & Platt, 1978). These emphases on race and class oppression can seem applicable to the population at those times, as most Asians who came to the United States before the World Wars were men, and the majority who arrived before the mid-1960s were poor and working-class laborers (S. Chan, 1991). But due to various policy changes after the 1940s, the Filipino *manongs* and other bachelor societies made way for marriages, children, and family reunifications (Scharlin & Villanueva, 2000; Wei, 2004). In particular, the 1965 Immigration Act significantly multiplied the number of Asian Americans, particularly those with significant financial resources, or high levels of education in STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) fields, in what is sometimes referred to as the Brain Drain of Asia (P. Ong & Liu, 1994; San Juan, 2000). While race and class discrimination persisted, Asians in America had become a more complex population. Thus, gaps in existing theoretical approaches and the “Oppressed Minority” frame began to be more apparent. While not straying from the call of the “Asian American” project of the 1960s, scholars in the 1980s were already observing the rising privilege and elitism among Asian Americans and the need to develop new and more comprehensive approaches to challenge social injustices (Omatsu, 1989).

The Context of Affirmative Action and Framing Asian America

A context that illustrates problems with the “Oppressed” and “Model” minority frames is affirmative action, which were policies put into place most notably for more equitable access to employment and higher education. Originally intended to address historical inequities for marginalized groups (e.g., women, racialized minorities, people with disabilities, war veterans), affirmative action has continued to be a controversial issue in the mass media and courts of law, where it is criticized as an unfair advantage in hiring and admissions for applicants who are unqualified, often to the detriment of whites and other groups who consider themselves displaced solely because of their race (Hartlep &

Lowinger, 2014; Museus & Maramba, 2011). Within racialized “minority” communities, affirmative action has been critiqued for overlooking issues of class and privilege, and providing benefits to applicants with great capital who happen to be of a racialized minority. For example, one problem, previously discussed, is when all Asian Americans are generalized and racially lumped together: this time as a historically marginalized group like “Oppressed Minority” or “people of color” (Jung, 2014). Here, members of other marginalized groups may question why Asian Americans are included in affirmative action programs, when their group does not seem very “oppressed” and is doing quite well (Gupta, 2006). If race appears to be the only consideration for program eligibility, critiques may be leveled at Asian Americans coming from highly educated middle-class families, participating alongside others who come from poverty and other hardship. Conversely, Asian Americans are sometimes not included as part of affirmative action policies, such as admissions to public magnet schools that may have strong reputations and require an application but are also tuition-free. In this context we may find more privileged Asian Americans locating themselves away from people of color, and closer to whites and other “non-oppressed” communities. In this context, Asian Americans may also claim displacement by “less qualified” applicants (J. J. Park & Liu, 2014). Often times, the rhetoric of the “Model Minority” frame echoes in the near distance when Asian American constituents complain, “If we came to this country without anything and still made it, why can’t *they*?” Here, “they” can refer to Latina/os and African Americans, despite some of the obvious flaws in comparison.

Aside from other “Oppressed Minority” groups, within Asian American groups there can be critiques of more privileged individuals who displace others coming from significant hardship. One example concerns certain Southeast Asian groups who came to the United States because of its war in Vietnam. Various types of affirmative action legacy programs still exist for Hmong, Vietnamese, Laotian, Cambodian, and Mien Americans. However, inequities can occur when factors other than nationality and ethnicity are not considered. For example, the earliest wave of Vietnamese refugees and immigrants who came to the United States tended to be more privileged, such as those who had money, education, or military clout, and received greater government assistance than those who came later (Võ, 2008). The later waves had significantly less capital, yet there is usually no distinction made across Vietnamese groups. In Cambodia, the civil war, mass imprisonment, and purges that occurred (N. J. Lin, Suyemoto, & Kiang, 2008) were experienced by some ethnic Chinese merchant families, often from Chaozhou or Fujian province backgrounds (Nyíri, 2012). On paper in the United States, ethnic Chinese Cambodians are held the same as Khmer Cambodians (L. W. Gordon, 1987), although the latter are “indigenous” to the land of Cambodia, were largely agricultural workers, and are noticeably darker in phenotype. Yet when we look at the educational and economic outcomes of these families, we tend to see much greater mobility for ethnic Chinese than Khmer communities, who often have similar educational outcomes and identities to that of many low-income African Americans (Chhuon, 2013; McGinnis, 2007). Despite the probable advantages of many ethnic Chinese and early wave refugee or immigrant subgroups, individuals from across the subgroups are usually considered the same when applying for educational

programs and admissions. Typically those of higher capital are accepted, as they appear to be more “college-ready.” While there has been some degree of “intermarriage” of the groups over time, the key point in mentioning these disparities in ethnicity, class, immigration history, and phenotype is to demonstrate how material inequities can occur when we homogenize and over-simplify race, experience, and merit, such as with the “Oppressed Minority” and “Model Minority” framings of the Asian American umbrella group.

Intersectionality and Transnationalism

Despite the shortcomings of the “Model” and “Oppressed” frames that largely focus on issues of race and sometimes class, both continue to be employed in popular and scholarly discourse. However, continuing changes within communities under the Asian American umbrella, and broader international changes (e.g. migrations, communications, popular media, social movements), have pushed theory and practice to be more nuanced and dynamic. Two generative concepts in better understanding these changes and their educational effects are intersectionality and transnationalism. Intersectionality was coined by legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989), within the context of naming and addressing institutionalized oppression in its multiple forms as they may occur simultaneously. Crenshaw initially focused on racism and sexism from a black feminist standpoint, but intersectionality was soon applied to other issues such as heteronormativity, classism, and ableism, in an effort to recognize and disrupt what Patricia Hill Collins has referred to as “interlocking systems of oppression” (Collins, 1991; Fujino, 1998). While many of the ideas behind it are not new (Boggs, 1998; Combahee River Collective, 1977; Du Bois, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 1996), intersectionality has been a generative construct across diverse areas of social sciences, humanities, and activism. Previous social justice efforts in the United States tended to prioritize just one oppression, often at the expense of others, due in part to gaps within the then-dominant approaches of Marxism-Leninism, Black nationalism, and white-stream feminism (Grande, 2003; Ling, 1989). This led to the marginalization of many communities, such as indigenous peoples and black women, whose positions and experiences were commonly relegated to the background of racial justice movements by black men, and feminist movements by white women.

Like with other racialized communities, intersectionality has afforded more nuanced approaches to the multifaceted problems faced under the Asian American umbrella, which, as has been shown, require more than a race analysis to move toward equity in schools and society. Utilizing intersectionality has allowed researchers and teachers with Asian American communities to tease out different overlapping elements of inequity, including the aforementioned contexts of ethnicity, gender, class, and sexual orientation, which may have been masked in previous approaches with a static focus on just race, language, or nationality (S. J. Lee, 2006; Narui, 2011). When used as a lead-off point to engage social issues in classrooms or scholarship, intersectionality can help facilitate a

more dynamic praxis through its multilayered analysis that does not “force” subjects to choose one part of themselves to identify and address, which can artificially isolate problems and subsequent interventions. Instead, educators and researchers can promote an intersectional praxis that is cognizant of the diverse influences and identities of people, which are hybrid and ever-changing and can both dehumanize and provide agency (Asher, 2008; N. I. Kim, 2000).

Another highly generative concept has been transnationalism, a newer global development that highly impacts educational research and pedagogy with Asian Americans. Transnationalism, which has multiple interpretations, generally concerns the heightened interconnectivity of peoples around the world largely due to changes in transportation, communications, and global flows of capital. This heightened interconnectivity includes shifting forms of culture and capital and the de-centering of the nation-state and nationalism among peoples. In other words, transnationalism interrupts some of the fixed notions that have historically attached populations to certain identities and practices based on the countries and regions they are from and live in. In education, much policy, curriculum, and intervention have been based on these more fixed notions of communities. However, the increasingly transnational nature of populations, including Asians in the United States, problematizes these notions. Prior to globalization, most Asian immigrants and refugees stayed in the United States after arriving, and this norm was prevalent in developing studies and pedagogies with Asian American populations that flowed in one direction (Osajima, 1998). Indeed, research usually just differentiated between how many generations an individual or family may have been in the United States, and did not account much for them going back and forth between the United States and their motherland, or going to other countries and back to their motherland and the United States. In current times, a higher level of transnational flow has been observed among Asian Americans, including between and around the United States, the Americas, and Asia. For example, movements of East Asians to Latin America, the Caribbean, the United States, Southeast Asia, and also back to East Asia, have become more common (J. S. Y. Park & Lo, 2012; Ropp, 2000; Yamashiro & Quero, 2012). In some instances, this pertains to wealthy and middle-class families who pursue educational and business opportunities abroad, and also look to capitalize on tremendous growth in South Korea, India, and mainland China. These movements also include low-income parents and students who traverse state and national boundaries in order to find the best temporary work situations, and may operate under the radar of border surveillance and policing (Buenavista & Gonzales, 2011; Gupta, 2006). This heightened transnational flow has significant impact on myriad issues, such as nationality and citizenship, community development and ethnic enclaves, and marriage and raising families. Within education, scholars, policymakers and educators have had to adjust their approach to “Asian America” given the widening diversity, including very well-off students and their parents who bring different expectations, demands, and experiences to K-12 and higher education, while also fueling the ever-problematic “Model Minority” frame. In the neoliberal economy, school districts, universities, and the large nonprofit industry in education have sought the funding and transnational economic opportunities that come

with opening their doors to the rising Asian economic powers, particularly the People's Republic of China (Dirlik, 2012). Perhaps the closest paradigmatic shift that this can be compared to is after the 1965 Immigration Act, when relatively small populations and diversity in ethnicity, occupation, and class skyrocketed in growth. As previously discussed, these drastic demographic changes made apparent the need to adjust the optics through which Asian Americans were viewed, including the "Oppressed Minority" frame.

In the current era, the more fluid and transnational nature of many communities under the Asian American umbrella demands a more expansive analysis, of which the concept of transnationalism can prove helpful. As Asian communities have migrated to the United States and the Americas for over 200 years, scholarship on Asian diasporas in North America have also taken place, providing some of the groundwork and current framework for research on transnationalism (Hirabayashi, 2002; Vang, 2010). In education, previous reforms concerning Asian Americans included calls to make curriculum and assessment more multicultural and culturally relevant, being mindful of the diversity under the pan-ethnic umbrella (Fu, 1995; Suzuki, 1984). The diversity types that were typically addressed were ethnicity, immigration history, and language, and less so gender, sexual orientation, religion, and other areas. As transnationalism continues to grow, efforts at educational equity will require even more modifications to address students and families who, despite being of the same ethnicity, nationality, language, and religion as other students in their class, may understand themselves differently and have very different practices from their peers and school community who have historically been considered "Asian American." Given these significant shifts, scholarship and Asian American studies programs have also shifted. This includes the University of California, Berkeley, which has one of the first Asian American studies programs in the nation and is tied to one of the few ethnic studies Ph.D. programs in the United States. In 2010, Berkeley restructured its name and agenda to the "Asian American and Asian Diaspora Studies Program" (E. H. Kim, 2010). Yet as research and teaching agendas seek to be more inclusive in their approach to Asian Americans and education, some scholarship remains wary of the shifts to transnationalism that blur the lines between Asian and Asian American studies (Okimoto, 2010). Concerns include losing the activist leanings of Asian American studies and the ethnic studies tradition, being subsumed into "international studies" that may hide inequities faced by historically marginalized populations in the United States, and becoming co-opted by transnational private and government interests that are pandered to by the university corporation.

Moving Forward

Current Issues

Asian Americans and Education

In this discussion of issues within the area of Asian Americans and education, a major thesis point has been that the tremendous diversity included under the monolithic Asian American umbrella demands greater disaggregation in order to be more accurately understood. Through a general description of demographics, the large disparities of Asian Americans, including between ethnic and regional subgroups, have been introduced, and the history of the construct of “Asian America” and the various tensions that hide behind the pan-ethnic name and project have been discussed. The two dominant frames of Asian Americans in education, the Model Minority and the Oppressed Minority, were introduced alongside the context of affirmative action to illustrate the inequities that occur in policy, research, and pedagogy when the analyses of Asian American communities are not nuanced and are based on a singular frame or a forced binary concept. Two generative pathways toward a more dynamic analysis and praxis with Asian American communities through the concepts of intersectionality and transnationalism have been presented. Throughout these discussions, examples and contexts were provided of how the issues play out in policy, research, and teaching. A more equitable and dynamic approach to the topic of Asian Americans and education is possible, but it is beyond the scope here to name all of the issues in education faced by Asian American communities, in what might amount to a “grocery list” of essentialized problems and interventions. Instead, several prevailing issues faced by multiple communities under the Asian American moniker are indexed.

As may be expected with non-white, immigrant, or minority populations in the United States (Jiménez, 2012), Asian Americans have faced longstanding exclusion from the education system. If we turn to some of the most notable struggles, more well-known cases of exclusion have included *Tape v. Hurley* (1885) in the California Supreme Court, the 1968 Ethnic Studies Strike in the San Francisco Bay Area, *Lau v. Nichols* (1974) in the U.S. Supreme Court, and the tenure battle of education professor Don Nakanishi at UCLA. Widely taught within the canon of Asian American studies, these cases speak to the historical exclusion of Asian Americans in various arenas, including school enrollment, bilingual education, curriculum, and academia (Fujino, 2008; Wu & Chen, 2010). Despite the California and East Asian focus of the four cases, they can be helpful in making connections across Asian Americans and other groups, as all four had wide implications in education and illustrate how Asian Americans, like other marginalized groups, had to become involved in advocacy and equity struggles and not just wait for the system to change itself. Conversely, with the upsurge of Asian representation in admissions and curriculum, education discourse that just focuses on these older cases runs the risk of re-inscribing the Model Minority Myth and excluding issues faced by less-privileged Asian Americans.

In less visible arenas of education, Asian Americans still experience issues with exclusion and access, such as the aforementioned underrepresentation or lack of support in special education, which can be seen as more of a reification of the Model Minority Myth and lack of resources, rather than the higher academic abilities of Asian Americans. Language support for Asian American students and their parents continues to present difficulties for bilingual education, which is highly structured around a “one other language” Spanish

paradigm. Not only do these language programs tend to devalue home languages (Martínez, 2013), but they are also known to have trouble developing curriculum and assessments that accommodate the diversity of languages and dialects that Asian Americans may speak, read, or write, such as the multiplicity of languages spoken by immigrants whose nationality is Indian (S. Shankar, 2011). This lack of support can be tied to teacher education, including credentials for bilingual teaching, teacher education coursework, pre-service placements, and the lack of recruitment and retention of Asian American teachers in general (Goodwin, Genishi, Asher, & Woo, 2006; Sheets & Chew, 2002). While it is common for teacher education programs around the country to have missions of equality and multiculturalism in schools, there is significant disparity in engaging with the diversity of Asian American communities in non-essentialist ways (Choi, 2016; Li, 2013). A not unusual arrangement in teacher textbooks and training are static models of race and culture, which float from one racialized group to the next, starting with African Americans, then Latina/os, and then Asian Americans, with no examination of whiteness (Lei, 2006). Despite good intentions, these issues are compounded when there is a lack of research on Asian American teachers and students that teacher education programs can work with (Pang, 2009), and by the statistic that over 80% of the teaching force is white, middle-class women who may need significant coursework, pre-service, and in-service development to equitably teach with such diverse school communities (Irizarry, 2011; Kohli, 2009).

Issues with special and bilingual education, teacher recruitment and education, and curriculum are not new when concerning Asian Americans. Some of the more recently emerging issues lie with communities that are not historically emphasized in scholarship on educational equity and social justice. Per the discussion on transnationalism and Asian Americans, there are growing issues with students and families who come from transnational backgrounds, which are often highly privileged. One example concerns middle-class and affluent parents who push their children toward high academic achievement through a slew of after-school tutoring to maintain a high GPA, high-stakes test preparation to garner top scores for elite program and school admissions, and private extracurricular programs to beef up their résumé for university applications. These parents are not representative of the majority of Asian American families, yet given the transnational shift of scholarship, in these families' countries of origin there is already significant research and concern regarding the ill effects of "shadow education" and high-stakes exam culture (Bray & Kobakhidze, 2015; Byun, 2014), which have also been observed in the United States (Zhou & Kim, 2006). Educational research has examined the debilitating effects on the public system from primary to higher education, including rote teaching, large-scale cheating, and high strain placed on children, which has led to an increase in highly publicized suicides (Cheung & Chiu, 2016). In the immediate context of the United States, the pejorative nickname of "tiger moms" has been applied to South, Southeast, and East Asian parents who push their children to succeed in similarly extreme ways, regardless of class (Qin & Han, 2014). Aside from the ill effects on children and public schools, these families, particularly the affluent ones, are also among constituencies who strongly oppose programs that stem from the legacy of affirmative

action, which they feel privileges deficiency, particularly by Latina/os and African Americans (Spencer, 2015). Whether they are recently arrived elite transnational families, or more long-term residents who have excelled in schools, these Asian American families contribute to the Model Minority Myth and the division of minority groups in the United States. The experiences and practices of this one high-profile population may end up being generalized to all Asian Americans, thus further concealing the tensions and issues of other subgroups.

Next Steps and Pedagogies

As the international gaze moves toward “top-ranking” Asian countries on international exams like the PISA and TIMSS, with ties to “top-performing” Asian American students in U.S. schools, critically rigorous research on Asian Americans becomes increasingly important on the global stage. With this in mind, some of the major demographics, conceptualizations, and dilemmas within the area of Asian Americans and education have been reviewed. The concept of “Asian America” itself presents an assortment of problems that typically emerge across studies of Asian Americans. If the research does not include such questioning of the monolithic umbrella term, it may reinforce the large body of research that has glossed over the enormous diversity and disparities of the Asian American population. Although concerns of homogenization and essentialism have been discussed for several decades (Coloma, 2006; Lowe, 1991; Ocampo, 2013), the dilemmas within a pan-ethnic project such as “Asian America” persist and are perhaps broadened by factors of transnationalism (Cainkar & Maira, 2005). In an influential paper by seven South Asian American scholars at the turn of the 21st century (Davé et al., 2000), suggestions were made for the research to incorporate pedagogies organized around themes and crisis points, and research around inter-minority relations and professional-class Asian Americans, in order to more fully engage the complexity of the umbrella group that has all too often been left behind. Some of the literature has taken up these suggestions and been able to offer more nuanced and inclusive scholarship, especially via themes and the context of middle- and upper-middle-class Asian Americans (Du, 2010; Tiwana, 2012). However, a rather understudied area is “inter-minority relations” or the relations between marginalized groups in the United States, which now constitute a majority in some states. A crucial tension here lies in what has been labeled anti-Black racism by other “minorities,” including more elite recent immigrants, and working-class Asian Americans whose families have been in the United States for multiple generations (Nopper, 2010; Rodríguez, 2005). This tension is sadly ironic given the enormous influence that African Americans have had in Asian American struggles for social justice. Perhaps the most well-known “crisis point” of “inter-minority relations” and anti-black racism with Asian Americans was the 1992 Los Angeles Uprising, largely involving African Americans and Korean Americans (Chung, 2007). More recent was the 2014 slaying of unarmed African American father Akai Gurley by Chinese American police officer Peter Liang in New York. Despite an understandable range of emotions regarding the two instances, both incidents offer rich contexts for critically studying and teaching about African

American and Asian American communities, and uncovering the intersectional factors at play in controversies like the slaying of Akai Gurley and the broader #blacklivesmatter social movement.

In addition to teaching and studying via “crisis points” and “inter-minority relations,” other bodies of work have also dynamically explored issues and pedagogies that can help move toward greater educational equity and social justice. Within ethnic studies and Asian American studies, there has long been a call and practice of connecting communities to campus, or community as campus (Kiang, 1998; Osumi, 2003; Tachiki, Wong, Odo, & Wong, 1971). In recent years these traditions have been linked to service learning and its potentially transformative effects, often in urban areas and with working-class students (B. Chang, 2015B; Yep, 2010). In addition to outcomes associated with engaging community-based issues and learning outside of classrooms, service learning has also been tied to participatory action research (PAR), where students, teachers, and their greater school community engage in research projects embedded in the issues of their local neighborhood (Bautista, Bertrand, Morrell, Scorza, & Matthews, 2013; Ishihara, 2011). As the findings are presented to other local stakeholders, as well as scholars and elected officials, these projects develop digital and performative elements that have been shown to effectively develop multiple forms of literacy (B. Chang, 2014; Haddix & Sealey-Ruiz, 2012). As these pedagogies are thematic and community-based, they help facilitate communication and collaboration among Asian American stakeholders and members of other groups (e.g., racialized, socioeconomic) that are also part of their local community. Such projects are increasingly important in the neo-liberal economy, where official schooling spaces have become more privatized, assessed, and policed. Given such constraints within the traditional boundaries of education, innovations in teacher education, out-of-school learning, and collaboration (e.g., schools, community organizations, tertiary campuses) become imperative in order to develop and sustain efforts toward educational equity (Tintiangco-Cubales, Daus-Magbual, & Daus-Magbual, 2010; Wong, 2010). With conceptual frameworks informed by critical pedagogy, culturally sustaining pedagogy, New Literacy studies, critical race, theory and others (Gutiérrez, Morales, & Martinez, 2009; Jocson, 2008; Ledesma & Calderón, 2015; Paris, 2012), these approaches to research and teaching help form grounded and intersectional praxes, which are well-poised to tackle the rich and complex diversity under the Asian American umbrella, as well as other communities in a changing transnational context of education.

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