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Culture in Asian American Community Psychology: Beyond the East–West Binary

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Abstract In response to a call to better integrate culture in community psychology (O'Donnell in American Journal of Community Psychology 37:1–7 2006), we offer a cultural-community framework to facilitate a collaborative engagement between community psychologists and ethnic minority communities, focusing on Asian American communities as illustrations. Extending Hays' (Addressing cultural complexities in practice: Assessment, diagnosis, and therapy, American Psychological Association, Washington, DC, 2008) ADDRESSING framework for considering cultural influences on a counseling relationship, the proposed framework provides a broad but systematic guidepost for considering three major cultural-ecological influences on Asian American communities: Race and Ethnicity (R), Culture (C), and Immigration and Transnational Ties (I). We provide a sequence of steps that incorporate the ADDRESS-ING and the RCI frameworks to facilitate the collaborative community-based research or social action.

Keywords Asian Americans · Community · Race · Ethnicity · Culture · Immigration

Introduction

In efforts to correct disciplinary and historical limitations, psychology has been making "cultural turns" for the past

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several decades (Seeley 2003). Eager to advance the science of culture, scholars have sought to specify, isolate, assess, and analyze the supposed operative components of culture in psychology (e.g., Betancourt and López 1993). However, too often, such calls were responded simply with an addition of a "cultural" variable (e.g., face, individualism-collectivism, acculturation, identity, language) assessed as an individual differences variable. Although well-intended, many of the efforts to guide scientific endeavors on culture and psychology have often led to essentialization (i.e., simplified and homogenized representation) of culture into discrete variables largely divorced from contexts and history (Okazaki et al. 2008).

Within community psychology, there have been increasing calls to consider culture as the context of diversity and to articulate such efforts as constituting cultural community psychology (O'Donnell 2006). Given community psychology's emphasis on ecological perspective, which holds that human behavior and problems of living are better understood in context of their social and physical environment rather than in isolation (Kelly 2006), community psychology's cultural turn has largely resisted the essentializing tendencies that can be found in psychology to reduce culture into isolated variables. At the same time, cultural community psychology as envisioned by O'Donnell (2006) is still in a relatively early stage of development, and further articulation of what it means to integrate cultural considerations into our work with diverse communities may be helpful. In this paper, we propose a framework with which to examine cultural influences on community psychology research and action with ethnic minority communities, focusing on Asian American communities as an illustrative case. We organize our discussion around three sets of major cultural-ecological contexts that shape Asian American communities: Race

and Ethnicity (R), Culture (C), and Immigration and Transnational Ties (I).

Before we proceed with the proposed framework and its application, a few cautionary notes about the characteristics of Asian American communities and a discussion of the disciplinary ties between community psychology, ethnic studies, and sociology of race are in order. Asian Americans represent a fast-growing, extremely diverse population and there is—of course—no singular, unified Asian American community but a vast number of communities that maintain some ties to their Asian cultural roots. Given the enormous heterogeneity, what would be the most fitting definition of a community for this population? The ecological perspective that has been central to community psychology (Kelly 2006) has sought to describe community as high-impact social settings and contexts (such as neighborhoods) that affect individuals. Within a behavior setting theory of community psychology, community has been defined in terms of "activity range" or the number and kinds of settings that an individual participates in (Perkins et al. 1988). Certainly, many Asian American communities are place-based (e.g., residents of Little Saigon in Orange County in Southern California, Vietnamese American community in New Orleans, Louisiana). However, many Asian American communities transcend local settings because of their national or transnational nature (e.g., Song 2008).

Indeed, sociological and psychological definitions of community have often assumed that its members share not just the geographical space but also common values and purpose, a sense of solidarity, and feelings of belongingness and connectedness. However, Colombo, Mosso, and De Piccoli (2001) argued that such an idealized view of community may fail to take into account various intergroup dynamics such as conflict and power hierarchy that frequently exist within various community systems. For Asian American populations that encompass diversity in multiple ways (e.g., language, national origin, socioeconomic class, citizenship status, and so on), within-community dynamics may be fraught with tension along various cultural differences. Finally, it is important to recognize that individuals can belong simultaneously to multiple Asian American communities—even those with opposing values and beliefs (Mashek et al. 2006)–and that memberships in these communities are fluid.

Community Psychology and Asian American Psychology: A Shared Vision

In articulating the theoretical agenda for the future of Asian American psychology,Okazaki, Lee, and Sue (2006) called for a re-articulation of the field's mission to reflect a more "Asian Americanist" psychology. ("Asian Americanist" refers to identification with the scholarly missions and practices of Asian American Studies.) Asian Americanist psychology seeks to reflect the values shared by community psychology and Asian American Studies—two of its intellectual homes—in its study of Asian American populations. Community psychology and Asian American Studies both sprang out of civil rights movements in the 1960s that called for an awakening of social and political consciousness, awareness of cultural hegemony and white male elitism, and a call for social justice and activism. (Louie and Omatsu 2001; Kelly 1990; Rappaport 1977). Both fields saw themselves as more than just academic disciplines but also vehicles of social transformation (Maton 2000; Sarason 1978). Of note, the manner in which Asian American Studies movements have been described is very similar to that of community psychology. For example, Omatsu (1994) describes the Asian American movements as "struggles for liberation" that "confronted the historical forces of racism, poverty, war, and exploitation…, generated new ideologies…, redefined human values…, [and] transformed the lives of 'ordinary' people as they confronted the prisons around them" (p. 20).

Community psychology and Asian Americanist scholars have also advocated for participatory action research agendas since their inceptions (Maton et al. 2006; Ono 2005). The very earliest Asian American Studies programs, begun at San Francisco State University and UC Berkeley in the late 1960s, took participatory action a step further by charging a collective of students, professors, and community activists with monitoring and shaping the overall curriculum to capture both relevant classroom content from an Asian Americanist perspective and community-based "serve the people" programs designed to "transform student elites into community activists" (Dong 2001; Umemoto 2000). With community psychology, Asian American Studies also shares values for interdisciplinary research (e.g., Ono 2005; Wu and Song 2000; c.f., Maton et al. 2006), ecological levels of analyses, empowerment (e.g., Omatsu 1994; Umemoto 2000) and self-reflexivity (e.g., Chuh 2003; c.f., Harrell and Bond,2006).

Although Asian American psychology and community psychology both strive to empower communities, community-level analyses of psychosocial behavior among Asian Americans remain few and far between. The few studies using participatory action research method with Asian American communities have focused on conducting needs assessment for, and implementation of, health promotion, prevention, or support programs (e.g., Choudhry et al. 2002; Cook et al. 1997; Yeh et al. 2008). In these efforts qualitative research has been used to give voice to the immigrant community members who are often facing multiple challenges of immigration, racism, poverty, and lack of access to resources. However, because the focus of

these efforts are on documenting and meeting the needs of the specific communities that the research participants in interviews and focus groups represent, there has been relatively little discussion about how to systematically consider "culture" in such collaborative efforts.

Cultural-Community Framework

Our cultural-community framework extends Hays' (2008) ADDRESSING framework for conceptualizing cross-cultural work in clinical practice. Hays' model recognizes the multiple, dynamic, and overlapping nature of cultural influences and the societal privileges accorded to various social group memberships. Specifically, the ADDRESSING framework consists of ten dimensions of cultural influences: Age and generational influences, Developmental and acquired Disabilities, Religion and spiritual orientation, Ethnicity, Socioeconomic status, Sexual orientation, Indigenous heritage, National origin, and Gender.

Hays (2008) argues that a cross-cultural clinical engagement is likely to be more successful if the clinician first engages in an introspection and self-exploration of the influence of culture on one's own belief systems and worldview. For example, a middle-class lesbian European American clinician may hold a heightened awareness of sexist and heterosexist biases in society but may have less salient awareness of issues faced by racial and ethnic minority individuals, people with disabilities, or people of lower socioeconomic status. Such cultural self-knowledge would then carry over into an effort to understand the client as a product of intersecting multiple cultural influences, and finally to the consideration of how the intersection of clinician's and the client's identities impact every aspect of the clinical encounter. For example, mental health issues of an older male client of Asian Indian descent are placed in context of his age-related issues and generational influences (e.g., immigrant who grew up under the British colonial rule), his religious upbringing and practices (e.g., he may possibly be a religious minority), his ethnic identity (e.g., he is often mistaken as an Arab male), and so on. The clinician then must consider how the differences and similarities in cultural identities and power may impact the clinical encounter (relationship-building, diagnosis and assessment, and treatment).

The ADDRESSING framework (Hays 2008) is focused on dyadic counseling relationships, but it can be easily applied to understand dimensions of cultural influences at the community level. In our extension of the Hays' framework to community research and action, we hold that the individual ADDRESSING dimensions are still relevant. However, we argue that a community-level ecological analysis introduces another layer of complexity because

there is likely to be variability among communities on multiple dimensions. For example, differences in local community contexts such as economic opportunities and ethnic density result in divergent cultural practices among communities of same cultural origin (e.g., immigrants from former Soviet Union) living in different parts of the nation (Birman et al. 2005).

In our framework, we discuss three ecological dimensions that are particularly critical in understanding an Asian American community. Race and Ethnicity, Culture, and Immigration and Transnational Ties constitute the three ecological dimensions of our cultural-community framework (hereafter referred to as the RCI framework). However, these ecological dimensions—while conceptually distinct—also intersect with one another in complex ways. Our discussion necessarily reflects this complexity. This approach, like many ecological theories in community psychology, owes its roots to a transactional worldview (Altman and Rogoff 1987) that sees aspects of the system (person and context) as inseparable; they coexist and jointly define each other. Moreover, transactional approach holds that time and change are also inseparable aspects of the system. The RCI framework also encourages the analysis of an Asian American community with an eye toward the fluid nature of each community shaped by historical, transnational, and local contexts.

Race and Ethnicity

Our explication of ecological influences on Asian American communities begins with the discussion of race because historical and contemporary experiences of Asian American people and communities are inevitably shaped by race. The discipline of Asian American Studies, on which we build our framework, also views race as the primary unit of analysis.

Definitions

On the one hand, there have been various attempts in psychology to define and differentiate among the constructs of culture, race, and ethnicity (see e.g., Betancourt and López 1993). On the other hand, there are arguments that race and ethnicity are socially equivalent in people's lived experiences and that the term "race/ethnicity" captures the essence of this social construct (Brown et al. 2007; Phinney 1996). We argue that analytical distinctions between race and ethnicity are productive in understanding Asian American communities because such distinctions allow community psychologists to better identify the particular within-group and between-group dynamics of a given Asian American community. Following the influential work of critical race theory (Delgado and Stefancic

2001) and sociological theories about race (Omi and Winant 1986), Moya and Markus (2010; cited in Markus 2008, p. 654) offered the following definitions of race and ethnicity for psychology, noting the critical difference between these two social formations surrounding the notion of power:

> *Race* is a dynamic set of historically derived and institutionalized ideas and practices that (1) sorts people into ethnic groups according to perceived physical and behavioral human characteristics; (2) associates differential value, power, and privilege with these characteristics and establishes a social status ranking among the different groups; and (3) emerges (a) when groups are perceived to pose a threat (political, economic, or cultural) to each other's world view or way of life; and/or (b) to justify the denigration and exploitation (past, current, or future) of, and prejudice toward, other groups.

In the case of Asian American communities, pan-Asian consciousness and solidarity across various Asian ethnic groups represent this notion of Asian Americans as a racial minority community.

> *Ethnicity* is a dynamic set of historically derived and institutionalized ideas and practices that (1) allows people to identify or to be identified with groupings of people on the basis of presumed (and usually claimed) commonalities including language, history, nation or region of origin, customs, ways of being, religion, names, physical appearance, and/or genealogy or ancestry; (2) can be a source of meaning, action, and identity; and (3) confers a sense of belonging, pride, and motivation.

In the case of Asian American communities, ethnic-specific organizations and ethnic enclaves (e.g., Japanese American Citizens League, San Francisco Chinatown residents) may represent the notion of Asian American communities as ethnic communities. However, because all Asian ethnic groups are racial minorities with histories of racial oppression, ethnic communities may face social problems and challenges that intersect with racial issues.

Impact of Race and Ethnicity on Asian American Communities

To illustrate the complicated relationship between race and ethnicity as they impact various Asian American communities, we describe research studies of two examples of contemporary Asian American communities: (1) formation of ethnic-religious communities on college campuses and (2) reaction of Asian American communities to an event filtered through racial lenses. In each of these examples, the view of Asian Americans as racial minorities served as ecological contexts for an emergence and solidarity of Asian American communities.

Ethnic religious communities often afford researchers with opportune sites for community-based research. With increased concentration of Asian Americans on college campuses as well as in metropolitan areas, and with increased access to symbolic and material Asian culture in and outside of the United States (e.g., through internet and satellite television), Kim (2006) argued that Asian Americans have greater opportunities to redefine their identities as "Asians" and form Asian American subcultures. In these examples, the emergent Asian American youth cultures are intimately tied to their hybrid identities that acknowledge, implicitly or explicitly, their social locations in relation to the existing racial hierarchy in the United States.

In her ethnographic study of second generation Korean American evangelical college students, Kim (2006) took up the question of why these American-born Korean American students—most of whom grew up in White, suburban, middle-class neighborhoods and who appear to be well-acculturated into mainstream American life—choose to affiliate with Korean American evangelical campus ministries instead of joining White, multi-ethnic, or pan-Asian campus ministries. Kim discovered that Korean American campus ministries reflect an emergent ethnic group formation given a structural opportunity in the form of sufficient ethnic density of Korean American students at the nation's top college campuses and the college students' desire to seek a sense of community on campuses. Ethnic density and desire for community, in turn were seen as setting the stage where Korean American students' homophily (or the desire to be with others who are like them) and experiences of being racialized in the society as Asian or Korean (i.e., not white) interacted with the perceived lack of opportunities for leadership in the white world to produce the phenomenon of second generation Korean American students flocking to Korean American ministries.

From the perspectives of Korean American pastors and leaders as well as students, Korean American ministries provide Korean American students with more opportunities for power and leadership without facing racial prejudice and marginalization. Moreover, their homophilic desires are based largely on the shared experiences of growing up in immigrant families and immigrant Korean American churches. Notably, the worship practices of second generation Korean American ministries mirror some of the practices of their parents' Korean American churches (e.g., "praying Korean style") as well as conscious differentiation from the churches of their parents' generation (e.g., opposing hierarchical structures, supporting more gender egalitarian relationships, using more contemporary music,

and seeking more religious authenticity). We note here that the second generation Korean American evangelical communities described by Kim reflect a sense of community that is based on shared experiences that lie at the intersections of race, ethnicity, and immigration, rather than of any particular Korean cultural essence. That is, the second generation Korean American evangelical culture was not primarily concerned with the preservation of Korean cultural practices but instead with their distinctions from the immigrant parental generation's church practices (immigration and ethnicity) and from the White American church practices (race and ethnicity).

The impact of race on community-level processes and narratives with Asian Americans rises to the forefront in the aftermaths of a racial trauma. In an analysis of *racial interpellation* (i.e., the recognition that one is being identified as a racial subject) among Asian Americans following the Virginia Tech shootings, Chong (2008) argued that "…the model minority has… become a central hermeneutic for Asian American self-analysis" (p. 43). The community "aftermaths" of the Virginia Tech incident is a good example of how the myriad Asian American communities' emotional reactions and behavior—ranging from shame and apologies for the perpetrator's action, relief that the perpetrator was not from their particular ethnic community, fear of being racialized and suffering reprisal, to anger directed toward not only the media that called attention to the perpetrator's race (and his foreignness) but also toward those members of their own communities for apologizing for his actions—cannot be fully understood with so-called cultural variables such as the loss of face, collectivism, or acculturation. It was precisely because of the Korean American communities' racial interpellation, particularly given their recent collective histories of interracial strife surrounding the Los Angeles Riots (Abelmann and Lie 1997) and the Flatbush Boycott of Korean-owned produce stores led by Black and Haitian activists (Kim 2000), that Korean Americans reacted in the manner they did to the revelation of the Virginia Tech killer's race and ethnicity. The larger Asian American communities' reactions, similarly, reflected their self-consciousness of the real or the imagined racial gaze of the mainstream media and the society, and the fear that this negative racial gaze would disrupt the presumably positive dominant cultural narrative about Asian Americans as the "model" minority.

Culture

Culture is, arguably, the broadest and most flexible term currently preferred by psychology scholars (Betancourt and López 1993), yet cultural explanations for Asian American experiences have also been used to classify, exoticize, and pathologize those who are deemed different (Uba 2002).

We discuss three salient ways in which "culture" is relevant to understanding Asian American communities: (1) debates surrounding the scholarly invocation of the East–West binary, (2) recognition that some Asian American communities invoke the East–West cultural narrative for various ends, and (3) hybrid Asian American cultures emerge at the margins and intersections of various cultural communities.

Definitions

Within community psychology, Maton (2000) had described culture as representing an important aspect of the social environment encompassing "belief systems, values, norms, traditions, and practices" (p. 38). O'Donnell (2006) referenced the anthropological sense of culture to refer to "people with shared experiences and shared meanings to understand life" (p. 2). Recent dialogues within cultural psychology have centered on how to best characterize culture. Hermans (2001) argued that scholars risk overstating a culture's internal homogeneity and external distinctions if culture is conceptualized as possessing some essential core characteristics. To move away from psychology's disciplinary prevailing tendency to equate culture with group (such as society, nation, ethnicity or people), Adams and Markus (2001) suggested a return to the classic definition of culture as *patterns*. Specifically, they offered the following definition of culture based on Kroeber and Kluckhohn's (1952) classic work:

> Culture consists of *patterns*, explicit and implicit, of and for behavior acquired and transmitted by symbols, constituting the distinctive achievement of human groups, including their embodiments of artifacts; the core of culture consists of traditional (i.e., historically derived and selected) ideas and especially their attached values; culture systems may, on one hand, be considered as products of actions and on the other hand as conditioning elements of further action (p. 287).

Importantly, this definition frames culture as not necessarily associated with membership in a particular racial or ethnic group. Within various Asian American communities, non-Asian family members (e.g., spouse or a partner of an Asian American, adoptive parent of an Asian American child, etc.) and friends may identify with, and share in the patterned world of the culture of an Asian American community.

East–West Binary

Cultural psychology's questions and re-articulation of the traditionally-held notion of culture as possessing a core

essence is particularly relevant to Asian American communities because both scholarly and lay communities have routinely referred to "culture" in Asian American communities along the imaginary cultural axis of the East versus the West. Within academic circles, Hermans and Kempen (1998) saw the tendency to reify culture into static, separate entities as related to cross-cultural psychology's tradition of creating cultural dichotomies (e.g., Western vs. non-Western, individualistic vs. collectivistic) and investigating cultural differences as dichotomous distinctions. Much of psychology research with Asian American individuals has also privileged this particular notion of culture as an East–West binary. Owing partly to their high representation in the student body of top research universities and colleges, Asian Americans—whose "culture" is seen as possessing essences of the East and the West—have come to represent a theoretically useful and methodologically pragmatic sample for many scholars to test psychological theories about how Western and Eastern cultures interact (see e.g., Hong et al. 2001; Wang 2008). In other cases, Asian American participants stand in contrast to European Americans as the embodiment of an Asian or collectivist cultural perspective (e.g., Campos et al. 2007; Leung and Cohen 2007). In these paradigms, explanations about psychological experiences of Asian Americans constantly index the core essence of East Asian cultures (often with references to constructs such as "Confucianism," "saving face," "collectivism") in contrast to North American culture (e.g., "individualism"). Although these binary notions of culture may be theoretically useful, some scholars argue that they can also have negative consequences for Asian American individuals and communities.

In her postmodern reading of psychological literature on Asian Americans, Uba (2002) critiques the attempts to explain behaviors of contemporary Asian Americans with Confucianism, Buddhism, and other underspecified and homogenized representation of ancient Asian cultures as reinforcing the societal image of Asian Americans as essentially foreign "others." Like many other Asian Americanist scholars (see e.g., *Amerasia Journal*'s 2005 special issue, "Orientalism and the Legacy of Edward Said"), Uba draws parallels from the work of Edward Said (1978) to Asian American experiences of being marked and represented as "other" and has extended the term "orientalizing" to apply to representations of Asians and Asian Americans. In his theory of Orientalism, Said (1978) argued that Western (primarily European) lay and academic attitudes about the Orient (Arab and Muslim peoples of the Middle East in Said's analysis) mimic and perpetuate colonial power structures. Similarly, Mahalingam (2007) has argued that essentialism—particularly as applied to social differences of racial and ethnic groups—is used by dominant groups (in this case White, affluent or middle-class, and often male) to maintain their privilege and power. Thus, from these postcolonial perspectives, psychological research with Asian Americans that deploys the East–West cultural binary paradigm may serve to perpetuate the marginalized status of Asian Americans as racialized minorities. In doing so, the imagined Eastern cultural essence ascribed to Asian American ethnic individuals and communities—which also makes them "foreign"—are cast as the primary explanation for Asian American behavior.

Moreover, analyses of Asian American cultural patterns can generate new insights when community-level issues are not reduced solely to those of American culture versus Asian culture. For example, Zhou and Kim (2006) argued that high educational achievements among Asian American students cannot be explained entirely with an invocation of a common cultural influence of Confucianism and its emphasis on education, family honor, discipline, and respect for authority. Through an examination of ethnic systems of supplementary education (e.g., weekend Chinese or Korean language schools, private afterschool academic tutoring programs) in Chinese American and Korean American communities in Southern California ethnic enclaves, Zhou and Kim showed that neither "cultural" nor "structural" explanations adequately captured the phenomenon. Rather, cultural values and behaviors interacted with the ethnic social structures that support community forces and their social capitals (in this case, educational achievements that translate into social mobility within the United States); these ethnic systems did not arise primarily due to indigenous cultural values but was a product of a culture-structure interaction that has been shaped and reinforced by the broader societal and racial conditions that immigrants have experienced. Similarly, in analyzing high-achieving and low-achieving Korean American students in urban settings, Lew (2006) argued that Asian "culture" is not a sufficient explanation of their school achievements and that these students use education (or dropping out) as racial strategies to resist their minority status and marginalization within society. For community psychological scholarship and practice to flourish, it is critical for the field to articulate theories about, and to build methods consistent with the notion of culture of Asian American communities that cannot be reduced simply to mathematical operation (be it additive or interactive) of the so-called Eastern and Western cultures.

Community Use of East–West Binary

Although Asian American individuals engage with a cultural environment that is much more complex and nuanced than what can be described on a unidimensional East–West

continuum, it must be acknowledged that community-based institutions and community members make abundant use of the East–West binary. Many community groups and members, particularly those that serve single ethnic immigrant groups such as Korean Americans or Chinese Americans, engage in binary cultural contrasts while expressing their concerns for their family's or their community's maintenance of cultural authenticity. Research has shown that recent immigrant Chinese Americans think of "being Chinese" and "being American" on a unidimensional, dichotomous continuum such that the more American one becomes, the less Chinese one turns out to be (Tsai et al. 2000). Action research conducted in partnerships with members of immigrant Asian American communities have also revealed that issues of grave concern to specific Asian American communities are often narrated through the lens of their native culture. For example, in a participatory action research to formulate a culturally relevant response to domestic violence within Cambodian refugee community, Bhuyan et al. (2005) had Cambodian women survivors of domestic violence share their experiences. In narrating how the ethnic community responded to domestic violence, many of the women referenced perceived Cambodian cultural norms such as men having power over women in society and in households, discouragement of help-seeking outside of the family, and the belief in the necessity of enduring one's karma even if it involves physical and emotional abuse. That is, many members of immigrant community narrated their own experiences primarily in broad "cultural" terms (e.g., Cambodian culture, Chinese culture), often in contrast to the "American" way of life.

However, even as immigrant Asian Americans may invoke the East–West binary in their cultural narratives, cultural community psychology must seek to understand their immigrant cultural narratives within larger sociopolitical, historical, and racial ecologies. Mahalingam (2007) considers the deployment of cultural essentialism in the shared narratives of marginalized communities (such as the case of immigrant Cambodian women in the U.S.) as also serving as an alternate frame that redefine their identities and social locations in relation to the dominant group. Such analyses arise from sociological analysis of immigrant communities. In her interview study with Filipina American community residents in San Diego, Espiritu (2001) found that their narratives about Filipino moral distinctiveness (vis-à-vis family closeness and virtuous sexuality) was deployed in contrast to their narratives of the moral flaw of White Americans. Espiritu argued that within the postcolonial context of the dominant culture's hypersexualized view of Filipina women (as docile mail-order brides or prostitutes), the Filipino American community's construction of the ideal Filipina as chaste and family-oriented

may be interpreted as a resistant narrative that aims to reclaim the morality of the community.

In another example, Pyke's (2000) work exploring the ways in which Korean and Vietnamese American young adults reflect on their family experiences growing up as children of immigrants further illustrates how Asian American identities are shaped by simultaneous self-consciousness of and resistance from notions of normality and Whiteness. Pyke's analysis revealed that Asian American family culture is often interpreted against a framework of the "normal American family" as portrayed in TV shows like Leave it to Beaver and The Brady Bunch. On the one hand, Korean and Vietnamese American children of immigrants in Pyke's study felt that their parents were too strict, unaffectionate, and distant compared to the "normal American family." That is, these Asian American young adults of immigrant parents appear to have internalized the dominant American cultural narrative that essentializes and denigrates "non-Western" parenting practices. In this way, Korean American and Vietnamese American young adults' narratives about their own families can be described as self-Orientalizing narratives. However, when imagining caring for their aged parents in the future, these Asian American young adults do assert an alternative narrative, describing pride in their families and in their "traditional" cultural values because unlike the "normal American family," they perceived themselves to practice filial piety through their willingness to support their parents financially and physically in the future. Thus even in the overwhelmingly self-pathologizing views of their immigrant families, Asian American young adults narrate an aspect of their cultural identity that redeem the morality of the community.

Both Espiritu's (2001) and Pykes' (2000) work are consistent with Mahalingam's (2007) assertion that social essentialism (via community narratives) are deployed by racialized communities to resist the dominant cultural views about them. That is, rather than passively absorbing essentialist representations created by the privileged group, Asian American communities may weave counter-narratives that are empowering even as they echo the East–West binary.

Hybrid Cultures

Scholars of immigration have long argued that a new culture emerges in the process of acculturation of an ethnic group, a process that has been described as ethnogenesis (Roosens 1989). Hermans and Kempen (1998) argued that hybridization and the emergence of new cultural mixtures present a challenge to cultural dichotomies. In their discussion of patterns of acculturation among Asian American undergraduates, Flannery, Reise, and Yu (2001) asserted

that this is likely the case for Asian American acculturation, particularly among younger generations, that a third culture qualitatively distinct from the heritage Asian culture and from mainstream American culture emerges. Youth culture is a particularly useful site for exploring the notion that Asian American cultures (and here, we use the term Asian American not to signify a pan-Asian ethnicity but to denote inclusively the various "hyphenated" cultural identities and practices, thus Asian American *cultures*) are distinct entities from Asian cultural identities and practices. Importantly, an articulation of the features of Asian American cultures in youth communities involves references to racial and sociopolitical discourses that are often missing from a more individual-level articulation of Asian cultural variables.

Youth cultures often form in reaction to dominant White culture but also situate themselves within multicultural contexts. Wang (2001) noted that beginning in the early 1990s, Asian American youth began responding to calls by African American hip hop artists like Public Enemy and Ice Cube to create music "for the people." Early Asian American rappers strived to create politically conscious music that educated fellow Asian Americans about community issues, but later generations of Asian American rappers have become more self-conscious about using racial and ethnic signifiers in their music, attempting instead to gain recognition from a more "universal" audience. Wang's research brings attention to the importance of examining not only Asian American youth subcultures alone or in reference to dominant White culture, but also in a broader multicultural context. It should be noted that although fashion and music and other cultural artifacts are consumed and appropriated by Asian American youth communities as the most visible signifiers of their newly emergent culture, there are specific cultural practices, identities, and shared experiences among the consumers of such cultural artifacts.

Immigration and Transnational Ties

Our discussions thus far about the meanings and impact of race, ethnicity, and culture on Asian American communities have already alluded to other sociohistorical ecologies that shape individual and community narratives. In this section, we highlight the following constructs related to Immigration and Transnational Ties that shape various Asian American communities, both structurally and psychosocially: (1) History of the group within the U.S., (2) Generational influences within the U.S., (3) Citizenship and Legal status, and (4) Geopolitical and transnational contexts rooted in historical and contemporary U.S.-Homeland relations.

Historical Context

A major determinant of the social location of Asian American communities is its historical roots in the context of US racial history. Pioneering scholarship in Asian American Studies has been devoted to telling the stories of Asian American immigration and settlement within the U.S. (see e.g., classic texts by Chan 1991; Takaki 1989). Acquiring knowledge about the history of Asian Americans (and the particular ethnic group) will help to locate and interpret the current community's experience in its historical ecology. The year 1965 marks the major demarcation point in the history of immigration of Asian Americans, as the Immigration and Nationality Act reversed policies of systematic exclusion and restrictive immigration of people from Asia and other non-European nations. The new policy gave preferences for family reunification (i.e., U.S. citizens and permanent residents can sponsor their family members) and for those who can make professional contributions to the U.S. Of course, post-1965 immigrants from Asia vary widely in their migratory experiences, with some migrating under professional preferences (e.g., medical professionals) while others migrating under refugee resettlement process (e.g., Southeast Asian communities subsequent to Vietnam War). For example, a collaborative engagement with a Hmong American refugee community in Minneapolis would call for—at a minimum—a historical knowledge of the Vietnam War and the Hmong role in the American war efforts, trauma and resilience of the Hmong people's escape, migration, and resettlement in the United States, and the recent local history vis-à-vis Hmong Americans in Minneapolis. A collaborative engagement with a Filipino American community in Northern California would call for a knowledge of the colonial history of the Philippines and its continuing legacy on Filipino American communities (Okazaki et al. 2008).

Historical analysis can also be helpful in seeing that contemporary experiences of a particular Asian American community may represent a larger pattern of racial experiences. We discussed earlier the formations of Asian American youth cultures as an example of hybrid culture that transcends the East–West cultural binary. Through a historical lens, Lim (2008) argued that formation of Asian American youth culture, especially the pre-1965 era, was a response to the "contradiction between the democratic promise of American national belonging and the practices of racial segregation and exclusion" (p. 213). Lim reviews the historical ethnic-specific cultural productions such as those of Japanese American and Chinese American clubs that began forming in the 1930s. Excluded from mainstream clubs in their schools, larger communities, and national organizations because of racial discrimination, Japanese Americans and Chinese American second

generation youth established their own ethnic churches, basketball leagues, and beauty pageants. In other instances, Lim (2008) noted that second generation Asian American youth appropriated commodities of American consumer society to form their own culture. For example, during the 1940s in response to racial prejudice and societal segregation, young Filipino American men formed their own youth culture through the wearing of the zoot suit, which had strong links to Mexican–American culture but was customized to fit their own physiques and their emerging aesthetic.

Generational Context

Another major marker within Asian American communities, as with other immigrant communities, is the generational cohort with which its members identify. Generally, the immigrant generation (born overseas) are referred to as the 1st generation, those whose parents were immigrants but were born in the United States are referred to as the 2nd generation, and those whose grandparents were immigrants but they and their parents were born in the United States are referred to as the 3rd generation and so on. Because roughly two-thirds of Asian Americans were immigrants according to the most recent U.S. Census (2002), there are further cultural distinctions to be made among the immigrant generation according to the age of migration. Those who immigrated before or during their early teens with their parents are often referred to as the 1.5-generation.

For some communities with a long history within the United States, the generational status also marks their particular historical location. For example, within the Japanese American community, the *issei* (or first) generation were those who immigrated primarily in the late 19th century. Many West Coast *issei* Japanese Americans, along with their *nisei* (second generation) children experienced internment during the World War II. Community-wide silence on this historical experience, and the *sansei* (third generation) Japanese Americans' efforts to reclaim this history has been poignantly documented in a study of this community by Donna Nagata (1990).

Citizenship and Legal Context

Within immigrant and ethnic minority communities, one's citizenship and visa status exert powerful influences on the daily lives of individuals as well as the community dynamics. We had earlier noted that an idealized view of community as providing primarily positive social benefits (e.g., sense of belonging and connectedness to similar others) may fail to note internal conflicts and power struggles within (Colombo et al. 2001). In this regard, Borg's (2006) analysis of one urban ethnic religious

community allows for the close analysis of a community-wide tension brought about by differences in social class and citizenship status.

Borg (2006) documented the process of an intervention led by him and a Jesuit priest at a Catholic parish serving Chinese American congregation in New York City. The intervention team was brought into the community by the pastor of the parish and was originally intended to address the growing tension within the Chinese American congregation. The church found itself torn between serving the needs of the newly arrived Mandarin-speaking, less acculturated and more impoverished immigrants who were increasingly populating the parish and the needs of the more affluent, educated, and acculturated Cantonese- and English-speaking Chinese Americans. In discussing the process of the intervention that unfolded with the parishioners, Borg placed the current tension within the larger sociological portrait of class and power relations among immigrant Chinese American community.

Borg's piece is notable for the researchers' self-reflection with regard to the social (and power) positions of the interventionists, particularly in relation to how they approached the task and how they interacted with the key stakeholders. Moreover, Borg's analysis revealed that the salient community-level variables that shaped the course and the outcome of the community intervention mirrored the racial and economic disparities in the United States, which in turn facilitated exploitation of under-educated undocumented immigrants within ethnic enclaves such as Chinatown and ethnic parishes. Borg suggested that traditional Chinese and Catholic.

Church value systems—both of which share the respect for hierarchical power and authority styles—shaped the community dynamics of this church. However, Borg's attention to the ethnic community's class and economic disparities as a contextual cultural factor was also critical to understanding the process and outcome of the community-level intervention. The intervention effort revealed that immigration status (i.e., established immigrants versus more recent immigrants) was very closely tied to social capital and power within this ethnic religious community. More generally, many Asian American ethnic communities are comprised of immigrant and American-born members, thus cultural community research must closely examine how the generational status and legal status within the U.S confer differential power, privilege, and narrative among the community members.

Transnational Context

The fact that many Asian American communities today are comprised of first generation immigrants suggests that historical and current geopolitical relationships between

the United States and their "homeland" shape the community in multiple ways. We return to the earlier example of the Virginia Tech incident (Chong 2008) to examine the influence of the geopolitical context on a particular community narrative. In the immediate aftermath of this tragedy, there were different types of Asian American communities that participated in the formation of community narratives about themselves. In some cases, community reactions came from pre-existing groups such as Korean American churches, Asian American student groups at various university campuses, and national professional organizations (e.g., the Asian American Journalist Association, Asian American Psychological Association). However, in the case of Korean American diasporic communities, there were direct interventions by the Korean government (in the form of the ambassador's formal apology and other official statements issued by the Korean consulate) that precipitated feelings of particular vulnerability among Korean Americans (Song 2008). Korean and American individuals in the United States and Korea (including American expats of various cultural backgrounds residing in Korea) engaged in narratives about race and violence through dialogues on temporary, online communities and other "communities of remembrance" according to Song (2008). Korean diasporic communities debated the meanings behind the Korean American communities' fear of retaliation and the apologies made by both Korean and Korean American officials, referencing the recent incidents in Korea involving American military personnel's violence toward Korean citizens off the military base. In this way, the diasporic communities engaged with implicit and explicit cultural patterns of ideas, values, and behavior that intersected race and ethnicity, culture, and immigration, specifically with references to history of race relations within the U.S., history of nation-state relations between the U.S. and Korea, racial and cultural stereotypes, immigrant status, and trans-Pacific ties between Korean American diasporic communities and their "homeland" communities.

Applying the Framework

In the final section, we discuss the ways in which the cultural-community framework can be used as a tool to facilitate engagement with an Asian American community in research and practice. Because community psychology projects often involve an interdisciplinary team of academics and perhaps key collaborators from the community of interest (Maton et al. 2006), this guideline is written to include a group process. The guideline presumes that the team has identified a particular Asian American community with whom they will engage in a collaborative project.

Step 1: Cultural Self-Assessment. The initial step in the process involves cultural self-assessments for each individual member of the team and for the team as a whole. This step can be accomplished using Hays' ADDRESSING framework, which is detailed in her 2008 text. Although there is a great deal of overlap between the ADDRESSING framework and the proposed RCI framework, it is also important for each team member to consider the particular impact that the RCI dimensions may have had on his or her world view and identity. In addition, group-level assessment of the research/action team's internal culture is called for in this step. In what ways are the members similar or different on various ADDRESSING and RCI dimensions? How do team power dynamics and strategies for working together and resolving conflicts reflect these dimensions? How are these dimensions and group dynamics likely to shape engagement with the Asian American community? These reflections of one's identity markers (or "position" in relation to others) are essential to the sort of ethnographic engagement of the research team members with the community (Schensul 2009).

Step 2: Cultural Community Assessment. Once the team reaches an understanding of the influences of various "cultural" dimensions they bring to the collaboration, the team may begin to discuss initial assumptions and expectations about the particular Asian American community using the RCI framework. The goal of a cultural community assessment guided by the RCI framework is to develop a rich and nuanced conception of community life and to understand the community as an "ecological niche" (Trickett 2009a). If the research team includes collaborators who are members of the Asian American community, those individuals are likely to serve as key informants or consultants for this process. However, these research team members must be cognizant of the limits of their knowledge. Thus, this step will likely include library, archival, ethnographic, and survey research, as the team members identify areas in which they wish to gain more knowledge about their ecological contexts (e.g., local history of this community, immigration history, linguistic dynamics, population demographics, existence of formal or informal community-based organizations relevant to the community, and points of friction). This step may also include identifying and examining media (e.g., websites, newsletters, art) to develop a fuller understanding of how the community functions and communicates and what material and symbolic cultural resources the community draws upon and creates. Further, an investigation of past academic-community partnerships and ongoing and historical intergroup dynamics may yield critical information on how best to initiate and sustain the collaboration. This knowledge may shape which team members are chosen to act as liaisons with the community.

Step 3: Cultural Community Engagement. As the team begins to engage with an Asian American community, the key stakeholders (research/action team, key members of the community) develop a collaborative understanding of this community as a backdrop for identifying the goals of the collaborative project (e.g., answering a research question, solving a particular community problem, etc.). In collaborating to identify goals, attention should be paid to how collaborations recreate or challenge broader socio-cultural, political, and historical power dynamics within and outside of the community. What are the social locations of team members and key community members involved in the project? Are the goals of the collaborative project consistent with the goals of the community at large or do they reflect the goals of a few members, whether they are at the center or the margins? Does the team have credibility and the ability to gain the trust of community members? Is the relationship between the team and the community mirroring problematic power dynamics that may or may not be at the heart of community problems (see e.g., Borg and Lynch 2005, Suyemoto and Fox Tree 2006, Trickett 2009a)? Is the collaboration listening to, retelling, and critically analyzing narratives told by the community vis-à-vis master narratives told of the community (Rappaport 2000)? Although the particular methods and practices will vary according to the parameters of the collaborative project, participatory action research (PAR) methodology (Trickett 2009b) is well-suited to the overarching goal of many community psychology projects. Schensul (2009) articulated that the identification of shared understanding of community culture through engagement in participatory formative research "transform(s) tacit knowledge of community cultural capital into explicit knowledge which can be used by participants as, or working with, interventionists to transform systems" (p. 246).

Step 4: Cultural Community Collaboration. As the team and the community proceed with the project, an iterative review of the cultural influences using the RCI framework at various points of the collaborative process may facilitate the work. In this process of monitoring, critically analyzing, and refining the conception of community culture, the team and community members should also attend to how the community shifts and evolve over time. In particular, the team may wish to pay special attention to community responses to ongoing and new sociocultural and political events, changes in cultural, racial and ethnic dynamics within and outside the community, the fluid movement of members into and out of the community, evolving cultural patterns, as well as direct and indirect impacts of the research or action project. By conceptualizing communities as complex and dynamic ecological systems, a community intervention (or more generally, any form of collaborative engagement) may be seen as a "critical event in the history

of a system" (Hawe et al. 2009). From this perspective, it is especially important that in this Step that community psychologists track changes in relationships and networks within the community. In this way, the project reflects the flexible and dynamic nature of the RCI dimensions of the community and acknowledges the agency of team and community members to act upon and shape the community.

In summary, we have argued that psychology-community collaborative projects in research and social action with Asian American communities may benefit from attending systematically to three broad sets of cultural-ecological dimensions (Race and ethnicity, Culture, and Immigration and Transnational Ties). The examples of research and action projects with Asian American communities cited here involve complex intersections of ethnic and cultural identities, racial contexts, and broad contemporary and historical ecologies of these communities in local, national, or transnational contexts.

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