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Asian American transfer students: The intersection of race & class

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Asian American transfer students:

The intersection of race & class

by

Joyce Lui

A dissertation submitted to the graduate faculty
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Major: Education (Educational Leadership)

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2013

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my parents, Lui King Tin and Lui Lo Hang Sin. Your belief in the transformational power of education and your sacrifices led me to this journey. To my three older sisters, Cynthia, Irene, and Anna, your courage and hard work made my road easier to walk and simpler to navigate. Mike, your love and support make everything better. Thank you to the participants in this study. I dedicate this study to all Asian American community college and transfer students.

Your struggles are real.

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ABSTRACT

There has been a limited body of research on Asian American students, specifically regarding community college attendance and the transfer process. The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore and understand how Asian American transfer students navigate the community college, their transfer processes, as well as their post-transfer experiences. Using Critical Race Theory as the guiding framework for this study, five themes emerged: parents' expectations, academic majors, a sense of community, old and alone, and class matters. Implications for community colleges and four year institutions, as well as future research ideas are discussed.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

AAPI (Asian American and Pacific Islander) men and women are leaders in every aspect of American life -- in government and industry, science and medicine, the arts and our Armed Forces, education and sports. Yet, while we celebrate these successes, we must remember that too often Asian American and Pacific Islanders face significant adversity. Many AAPI communities continue to fight prejudice and struggle to overcome disparities in education, employment, housing, and health care.

President Barack Obama

As I introduced myself to another doctoral student at a national conference, the conversation turned to the topic of future research and potential dissertation topics. I asked him what he was considering pursuing in research, and he mentioned higher education finance, policy, and community colleges. I shared with him my interest in Asian American Pacific Islander (AAPI) student issues, community colleges, and transfer student concerns. He asked some follow up questions and then he shared with me that he knows that there are AAPI community college and transfer students, but he was not aware of them. I smiled and wondered how many more times I would be having this conversation and how many AAPI community college and transfer students may be overlooked and underserved.

Almost half of the Asian American and Pacific Islanders postsecondary students attend community colleges (Lew, Chang, & Wang, 2005). While media images of *tiger moms* (Time, 2011) continue to further the false image of model minority, the need to understand AAPI experiences at community colleges and

transfer students have never been greater. President Obama has been one of the most passionate supporters of community colleges and has recognized the importance of developing the work force utilizing community colleges. He has openly stated the critical role of educating more people and fulfilling the goal of the US having the highest proportion of college graduates in the world by 2020. The president has tasked community colleges to produce five million more graduates by 2020. At this point, President Obama made a pledge of \$12 billion over ten years to pursue the goal (Fuller, 2010).

Community colleges serve many roles, such as vocational and technical education, remedial education, English learning programs, and others. One of the main functions of community colleges has been to educate and prepare students to transfer to baccalaureate granting institutions. In reviewing the literature on transfer students, Townsend and Wilson (2006) identified how transfer student scholarship focused on grade point averages and quantitative measures on academic performance. The lack of voice from the student experiences would fill a gap in the literature.

Community colleges have been lauded for the diverse students they serve, such as first generation students, women, students of color (Terenzini et.al, 1994). However, literature about students of color centered on Latina/os and Black students because it has been documented that Asian American and Pacific Islanders have not been underrepresented in higher education (Koretz, 1999). However, more recently, there has been more recognition of disaggregating certain AAPI groups, such as southeast Asians (Cambodian, Hmong, Laotian Americans) that have

significantly lower high school graduation rates and more than 1/3 of Asian Americans have limited English proficiency (Wong, 2012). Even though there has been a growth in focus on community college issues, there has not been a growth in AAPI scholarship, specifically peer reviewed journal articles (Liu, 2007).

The U.S. Census (2012) estimated the growth of AAPI group will be more than 40 million and will account to close to 10% of the population. Currently, AAPI is the fastest growing group in the US. If the community college rate of educating AAPI continues to hold at close to 50%, then the number of AAPI community college students will continue to grow.

Problem Statement

Community colleges have been and will continue to be the gateway to higher education for students of color (Hagedorn, 2004). However, deeper understanding of student experiences would enhance how scholars, educators, and practitioners can better serve diverse students. With the growing AAPI community (US Census, 2012) and President Obama's vigor for educating more people through the community college system (Fuller, 2012), it is imperative for higher education scholars to take note of AAPI transfer students. Consequently, community colleges and other institutions of higher education may not possess the information necessary to assist these students effectively (Liu, 2007).

The limited understanding of Asian American Pacific Islander students, beyond stereotypes should be ameliorated (Museus, 2009). Although literature on transfer students has grown, the limited research specifically on AAPI transfer students is lacking (Liu, 2007). Additionally, voices of AAPI transfer students need to

be added to higher education literature for scholars to better understand their experiences.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to describe and examine the experiences of AAPI transfer students in how they navigate the community college, their transfer processes, as well as their post-transfer experiences.

Research Questions

This study was guided by the following research questions.

1. How do Asian American transfer students view the impact of race on their postsecondary educational experiences?
 - a) What are Asian American transfer students' perceptions of their community college experiences?
 - b) What are Asian American transfer students' perceptions of their transfer experiences?
 - c) What are Asian American transfer students' perceptions of their post transfer experiences?

Proposed Methodology

A qualitative approach using phenomenology will be employed to examine the research questions associated with this study. Qualitative research draws from several disciplines, such as sociology, psychology, anthropology, and others that describe meaning as socially constructed by each person's interaction with his or her world (Merriam, 2002).

I approached this study from an interpretive theoretical perspective grounded in the epistemology of social constructionism. Constructionism is the recognition of people constructing meaning through interactions with the world (Crotty, 1998). In this qualitative study, I was the primary data gathering tool. I cannot separate myself from the research process and objectivity was not possible (Esterberg, 2002; Merriam, 2002). The purpose of qualitative research has not been to generalize the knowledge, but to gain a deeper understanding of lived experiences. Due to the personal nature of qualitative nature, I needed to recognize, comprehend, and navigate my positionality as the researcher during the study.

Purposeful selection was crucial because the primary goal was to understand the experiences of AAPI transfer students, who are enrolled in a 4-year university. Participants described their community college student experiences, transfer process, transfer student experience, and how racialization shaped such events.

Due to the importance of stories and experiences, phenomenology was an appropriate methodology to understand students' experiences. Phenomenological research focuses identifying the *essence* of a phenomenon from the perspective of the people who have experienced it (Merriam, 2002). This allowed the researcher to consider the phenomenon as an experience. More importantly, the unit of analysis may be the individual experience but the task for the researcher should be to dually understand the individual experiences and be able to place them within the phenomenon. In this study, I will be employing a series of three semi-structured interviews with each participant. A three interview series (Seidman, 2006) was conducted to provide rich and descriptive narratives for analysis. Pseudonyms were

used for all participants and chosen by the participants. Any identifying information will be removed from the transcribed data to protect their anonymity (Esterberg, 2002).

Theoretical Frameworks

As this study centered on a marginalized population, the use of Critical Race Theory (CRT) was instrumental in understanding how race and racism has affected the students. Therefore, CRT served as the primary theoretical framework for this research study. Critical Race Theory contained several main concepts, the most central would be that racism is embedded in the fabric of American society (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012) and it includes several more tenets to be explored in this study.

Teranishi and colleagues (2009) called for a focus in using CRT for AAPI scholarship, to concentrate on voices of students, interest convergence, and social justice. Another consideration of utilizing CRT would be to dismantle the Black-White binary in higher education scholarship. Rather than viewing AAPI as a separate group, scholars have created a binary of White and Black racial groups. In many instances, White community has included AAPI students and Black community has added Latina/o students. These combinations ignored the vast differences between White people and AAPIs as well as the differences between Black and Latina/os (Chang, Witt, Jones, and Hakuta, 2003). The need to understand AAPI voices and experiences beyond a normative binary would not only benefit AAPI scholars but push for a more inclusive understanding of other minoritized groups, such as indigenous communities. Further, the study of AAPI transfer students may include

adjustment factors of transitioning to a new environment, such as the four year university.

Significance of the Study

The Asian American and Pacific Islander community is the fastest growing group in the US (U.S. Census, 2012). Even though it has been documented that almost half of Asian adults have baccalaureate credentials, specific ethnic groups (Cambodians, Hmong, and Laotians Americans) have high poverty rates and incredibly low high school graduation rates (Wong, 2012). Not surprisingly, as explained previously, half of all AAPI postsecondary students attend community colleges (Lew, Chang, & Wang, 2005). One of the reasons may be that low poverty rates dictate that community colleges are the only avenue to pursue higher education and thus transferring is the only pathways to achieving the baccalaureate.

This study is important to higher education practitioners to better serve diverse students. Although this study has centered on Asian American and Pacific Islanders, the understanding of one ethnic minoritized group will help practitioners evaluate their procedures in serving diverse a student body.

With the knowledge gained from this study, administrators developing policies and procedures are able to consider the impact on AAPI. Scholars have identified AAPI student populations at the center of several policy discussions, such as affirmative action (Inkelas, 2003) and vague and unclear admission concerns such as creating higher standards (Kang, 1996).

Definition of Terms

Asian American and Pacific Islanders (AAPI): Individuals of Asian descent, consider the United States as their home, and who self-identify as AAPI. Currently, AAPIs include more than 48 ethnicities (more than 300 languages) including: Asian Indian, Bangladeshi, Cambodian, Chinese, Filipino, Guamanian, Hmong, Japanese, Korean, Laotian, Native Hawaiian, Pakistani, Samoan, Thai, Tongan, and Vietnamese (National Commission on Asian American and Pacific Islander Research in Education, 2012)

Community College: Any institution accredited to award the Associate of Arts, Associate of Sciences, Associate of General Studies, or the Associate of Applied Sciences as its highest degree. Included in this definition are comprehensive 2-year colleges as well as many public and private technical institutions (Jackson, 2011)

Community College Experiences: The experiences that occur in the community college setting prior to transferring to the university environment (Jackson, 2011)

Critical Race Theory: "...radical legal movement that seeks to transform the relationship among race, racism, and power" (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001, p. 144)

Intersectionality: Intersecting identities (such as race, gender, sexual orientation, and any other identity) that influence who we are and our positionalities in society. (Crenshaw, 1991)

Postsecondary Educational Experiences: The sum of the community college experiences, transfer experiences, and post-transfer experiences (Jackson, 2011)

Post-transfer experiences: The experiences that occur in the university setting after transferring from the community college (Jackson, 2011)

Racial Triangulation: AAPIs are triangulated in relationship to White people and Black people. The perceptions of AAPIs being superior to black people and inferior to white people (Kim, 1999)

Racialization: The ongoing process that forms cultural structures of delineating race. Racialization has not been created through science, and race has little to do with biology. There has not and will not be an absolute understanding of race due to the ongoing developments. Race and racialization have been and will continue to be tied to political powers (Lewis, 2003)

Transfer Experiences: The movement of students from one higher education institution to another and the process by which academic credits are accepted or not accepted by a receiving institution (Jackson, 2011)

Yellow Peril: Fear that Asians will possess economic and political power greater than White people (Wang, 1995)

Summary

The specific problem investigated in this study is the postsecondary educational experiences for AAPI transfer students. As the fastest growing racial group in the U.S., more knowledge and scholarship that speaks to this community is imperative to higher education. The central purpose of this study was gaining a greater and deeper understanding of AAPI postsecondary experience in higher education by focusing on transfer students and how race may play a role in influencing such experiences. Community colleges (and the transfer function) are

important to consider because they enroll about half of AAPIs. Little research exists on AAPI transfer experiences; therefore this study has expanded and broadened the research conducted regarding community colleges. The significance of this study is that the results can assist higher education practitioners, administrators, and policy makers with developing programming and policies that take into account of diverse needs.

Outline of Dissertation

In the next chapter, the literature surrounding AAPI, community colleges, and transfer function will be examined. The literature review drew attention to myth of model minority, campus environments (including community college and transfer contexts), and how race may play a role influencing various parts of the postsecondary experiences. Additionally, the next chapter will include a more thorough explanation of the theoretical framework, Critical Race Theory.

In Chapter Three, the qualitative methodology and methods used in designing and conducting this study was presented. Specifically, the research questions, research design, setting, population and sample, data collection, instrumentation, variables, data management, and method of data analyses will be presented. In Chapter Four, the participants' background information was included. The students' profiles include their ethnicities, family upbringing, and other facets of their lives.

In Chapter Five, the findings from this study comprised of academic major decisions, family impact, and how much socioeconomic status mattered to the participants. Lastly, Chapter Six will include the connection to the theoretical

framework and literature, implications for research and practice, and my personal reflection.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Life transforming ideas have always come to me through books.

bell hooks

The literature framework for this study involved five topical areas: (a) community colleges and the transfer function, (c) Asian Americans /Pacific Islanders, (d) use of Critical Race Theory and (e) intersectionality. The first topic was community colleges' role in postsecondary education and its competing missions and goals as well as the diverse student population it serves. The second topic was the literature regarding the transfer functions: non-linear transfer functions as well as the overall transfer process. The third topic was regarding Asian American/ Pacific Islanders: (a) research challenges, (b) bimodal distribution, (c) community colleges, and (d) the myth of the model minority and yellow peril. In response to the literature, Critical Race Theory was the main theoretical framework for this study and connections to the six tenets. Lastly, intersectionality served as an import conceptual framework to understand student identities and experiences.

Community Colleges: Divergent Purposes & Diverse Students

Community colleges have garnered national attention, and with attention, comes scrutiny. Community colleges have always had multiple missions and at times, the missions of the various institutions and various types of institutions have wide-ranging goals (Dougherty, 1994). One of the missions of community colleges has been open access and serving people who may not or could not pursue higher education through any other venue (Bragg, 2001; Nora, 2000). Dougherty (1994) succinctly stated, "... community colleges are closer... cheaper to attend, if only

because they are commuter schools... more willing to take on non-traditional students: high school drop outs, academically deficient, vocational aspirants, and adults interested in leisure education” (p.51). Boswell (2004) highlighted more recent trends and explanations for the growth in community colleges, such as the rising costs in higher education which has forced more students to find more affordable avenues of seeking a credential. Additionally, affirmative action has changed the landscape of admissions at selective public institutions which creates a climate that directs more students of color into community colleges.

Despite the positivity enacted in open access mission of community colleges, there has been a long standing debate. The debate focused on the *main function* of the community colleges. Due to the open access mission, the diverse goals of students, constituents, and policymakers shape each institution to identify purposes. At times, constituents and policymakers needs may differ from students’ aspirations. Students may be focused on their personal aspirations and gains while policymakers may center on economic development.

Dowd (2003) identified economic development as one of the foci of community colleges during the 1980’s. Employment, specifically regional and state economies, became more important than students’ personal, academic, and social ambitions. Some may view community colleges as state or local government funded entities and thus should aim to serve local and state economies. However, the extent that the economy has become more important than students has been decisive and plays a role in understanding the conflicting tensions of community colleges. Levin (2001) argued that community colleges have shifted their educational

goals to match with market forces. Education is no longer about liberal arts but the application of workforce training which best benefits the local economy to participate in the globalization.

The local economy and community has great effects on community colleges and vice versa. Economies benefit from a more educated labor force (Blundell, Dearden, Meghir, & Sianesi, 1999). However, community colleges have been criticized for reproducing social classes while maintaining the rhetoric of open access. Scholars have identified community colleges' act as a sorting function for higher education (Dougherty, 1994; Dowd, 2003). The sorting function sends students to pursue a vocational education, specifically low-income students and/or students of color. The sorting function is a neoliberal way to reproduce socioeconomic class that benefits the few in power (Ayers, 2005).

Although some students think they are entering community college with access to the baccalaureate, they could be diverted to vocational education. Interestingly, vocational education and transfer education are indirectly related. As vocational education has taken on a more prominent role, transfer education has decreased (Dougherty, 1994). Transfer education should be one of the bridges between community colleges and universities. Both community colleges and universities must consider how they can better serve diverse students.

Community college students differ from baccalaureate students in several ways. For example, 66% of community college students are underprepared (underserved may be a better explanation), and more than half (56%) of community college students who took placement exams were in need of developmental

education (Center for Community College Student Engagement, 2012). The rate may be higher since not all students are required to take placement exams. The percentages are dire, and one should consider that community colleges facilitate close to 50% of all postsecondary students' education (Center for Community College Student Engagement, 2012).

Some scholars have identified reasons for the barriers that limit student success. Many community colleges students are part time students with responsibilities that traditional age students at a baccalaureate granting institution may not face. Approximately six out of 10 community college students attend college part time (Center for Community College Student Engagement, 2012). Kim, Sax, Lee & Hagedorn (2010) identified the several different types of *nontraditional students*, such as students who identify more with their employment, students who work, and students who are parents. In spite of part time enrollment, students who work many hours transfer at a comparable rate as full time students (Center for Community College Student Engagement, 2012).

Some community colleges have programs in assisting underserved students to succeed (Hagedorn, 2004) and the programs' outcomes should be measured to find out whether the programs have contributed to the larger mission of equity (Dowd, 2003). One of the ways that community colleges have helped students become more successful is recognizing the role of faculty and administrators of color. When institutions have a greater proportion of faculty and administrators of color, students of color are more likely to achieve their goals (Opp, 2001). This may

be connected to how faculty and administrators bring personal experiences of being a student of color and sharing their journeys.

Bragg (2001) cautioned community college leaders and constituents to vary the ways of measuring success. Particularly, comprehensive community colleges may have multiple functions and leaders should find various methods of assessing each function. Ideally, the transfer function would serve as a bridge for the diverse students that community colleges serve to achieve the baccalaureate. However, democratic goals (and capitalistic goals) have been embedded into higher education. Efficiency has become a target (Dowd, 2003; Levin, 2001) and therefore the transfer function not performing at its optimum can be labeled as inefficient. In a capitalistic market, labeling as inefficient may trigger elimination.

Transfer Function

The tension between open access at community colleges and selective admission at some baccalaureate granting institutions is at the heart of the transfer function. Even though Berger and Malaney (2003) urged campus leaders to make community college student transfer a priority, practitioners may place a different emphasis on other missions of institutions. Scholars identified the transfer rates have decreased (Rendon, 1993; Zamani, 2001) and vocational education has increased (Dougherty, 1994).

The transfer function is the link between community colleges and baccalaureate granting institutions. Specifically, for many students of color, the community college has been the only access point to higher education and the baccalaureate degree (Laanan, 1996; Rendon, 2000).

As Zamani (2000) expressed,

This responsibility (transfer function) should not lie solely with the two year sector, as often the blame for lack of success in the transfer process is placed on community colleges. Two and four year institutions must be responsive and aggressive in addressing the role of transfer in producing upward mobility (p.22).

Finger pointing of underpreparing students at the community college and restating the lack of support transfer students receive at four year institutions do not help the students. The only solution would be for both types of institutions to implement changes.

Laanan (2007) explained how two year institutions need to be more aware of information advisors provide to students and faculty need to be more intentional in providing more opportunities for reading, writing, and research. Additionally, transfer students need to receive more information during orientation at the baccalaureate granting institution. All students would benefit from these initiatives. However, students of color may need even more support. Community colleges with higher rates of Latina/os and African American students have lower transfer rates. Additionally, as more students who differ from university students, who tend to be traditional age (18-23), middle class, and academically prepared, the transfer rate for that institution is lower (Wassmer, Moore, & Shulock, 2004).

Students not only face individual challenges, they face policy barriers that defer transferring. Understanding policy barriers for students seeking transfer would be crucial in shifting the blame from students to finding solutions to improve the overall transfer landscape. Boswell (2004) highlighted several barriers, such as the

misalignment between high school testing standards and the skills needed to be successful in college and/or skills being tested on in placement exams. One of the concerns with K-12 policies has always been how it connects to postsecondary education. For teachers, they may be forced to teach to a curriculum connected to a standardized test, such as *No Child Left Behind*. They lack the agency to support students in their education beyond the curriculum enforced by standardized testing (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2006). If a student were to share that he or she were interested in pursuing postsecondary education at a community college, teachers may be unable to provide guidance because they must stick to the curriculum set by *No Child Left Behind*.

Currently, there is no formal way for postsecondary institutions and K-12 schools to provide feedback to one another. There is no method to encapsulate high school, community college and university records. One of the benefits to the method would be to provide feedback to institutions and for institutions to highlight each other's strengths in preparing students for the next stage in their education (Boswell, 2004).

Financial aid policy has been another concern. Aid has shifted; it is less centered on need-based and more focused on merit. Due to the swing in financial aid policy, low income students qualify for less amount of aid and may have less access to higher education (Griffin, 2011; Monks, 2009). Additionally, affirmative action is another policy concern, and more discussion surrounding that topic will be included in this literature review. With several barriers that make transfer difficult, transfer function needs to be better understood.

Transfer function is one part of the process in educational attainment. Transfer in it of itself is a success story (Hagedorn & Lester, 2006). However, transfer function should be focused on attainment of baccalaureate degree for college students seeking transfer (Townsend, 2001). Although there has been more attention focused on reverse transfer and swirling, the goal should always be baccalaureate degrees. Students should be given the opportunity to become more knowledgeable about the necessary requirements to transfer (Laanan, 1996) and they should understand that not all journeys are linear.

Non Linear Transfers

Many think of transfer function as a one way street, from community colleges to baccalaureate granting institutions. Some people believe that many transfer students begin at the community colleges (attend two years), and then transfer to a university and graduate two years later. In fact, of those students who do transfer, only 37% transfer in their second year in accordance with the linear model. Many students transfer as late as their fourth or fifth years or even later (National Student Clearinghouse Research Center, 2012). The realities of student transfer pathways are much more convoluted, and it includes multiple transfer junctions (National Student Clearinghouse Research Center).

McCormick (2003) discussed the complicated way to assess students' financial needs due to swirling- students taking courses at multiple institutions. Swirling course patterns is when a community college student takes courses at institution A and then in the following semester takes courses at institution B, and in

the third semester taking courses at institution A. This student is swirling between institutions A and B. In comparison, double dipping refers to concurrent attendance at two or more institutions. One of the newer areas of focus is online education. Students may swirl or double dip with ease due to online education (McCormick, 2003).

Lastly, there has been research on lateral (horizontal) transfer. Lateral transfer is students transferring from community college to another community college or from a university to another university. Students are more likely to make lateral transfers early in their academic journeys, and it may be connected to students trying to explore to find a better fit (Bahr, 2011).

Transfer Process

The transfer process has been divided into pre and post transfer. Both experiences provide rich information for us to better understand the transfer process.

Pre-transfer experience. Students, especially students of color and/or students from low income families, who enter community colleges may or may not understand the differences between transfer education and vocational education (Rendon, 1993). It is incredibly crucial for them to not only understand the differences but to indicate to advisors which road they may prefer. Currently, 42% of students who enroll at community colleges, in the first semester, have indicated they would like to transfer and pursue the baccalaureate (Boswell, 2004).

One of the most important aspects of the pre-transfer period is transfer readiness. Hagedorn (2004) defined transfer readiness as the knowledge and

completion of courses that a community college student must take *and pass* in order to be admitted to a baccalaureate granting institution. For a student to possess transfer readiness, advisors must provide information (courses to take, application process, and etc.) to students. Faculty members need to be more intentional in providing more opportunities for reading, writing, and research (Laanan, 2007).

Post-transfer experiences. Although it is a measure of success that community college students have successfully transferred to baccalaureate granting institutions, the goal is baccalaureate attainment (Townsend, 2001). For many community college students, the transition is not seamless.

Community college transfer students must reconsider their roles and responsibilities beyond school work and consider how they wish to utilize their time. For example, transfer students had to reduce commitments to spend more time studying (Berger & Malaney, 2003). The academic courses may or may not be more rigorous, but the demand on their time changes. Most university faculty members may still view their students as a homogenous population and not the diverse students who view employment equally as important as coursework (Kim et. al., 2010).

Transfer students were more likely to be satisfied and achieve higher grades in the university setting when they were more informed and actively prepared for transferring (Berger & Malaney, 2003). However, some of the very same students who were very well prepared may also feel that the university is less supportive. Some students were having a harder time connecting with faculty and academic advisors compared to their community college experiences (Berger & Malaney).

Students who needed more support at the community college level (and received it) had a hard time adjusting to university instructors who may have less time and/or tied to students' perceptions of the lack of approachability were less satisfied. Students' perceptions of faculty members' approachability were a significant factor in students' efforts to connect with them (Laanan, 2007).

Different studies focused on how different racialized groups fair once they have transferred. White students were more likely to be satisfied with their post transfer experience and with their transfer destination (Berger & Malaney, 2003). Race, although a social construction, has become an important variable in studying education. In the next section of the paper, more discussions surrounding Asian American Pacific Islanders will be discussed.

Asian American and Pacific Islander

The latest census revealed that individuals of Asian descent are the fastest growing racialized group in the U.S. The Asian descent community grew more than four times the rates of the total U.S. population (U.S. Census, 2012). One of the most important aspects to understand the Asian American and Pacific Islander community is that *Asians* only exist outside of Asia (Pyon, Cao, & Li, 2007). Within the continent of Asia, ethnicity has been much more salient than one unified identity. Within the context of Asian community, people can belong to many different sub communities, such as Far East Asians (Chinese, Korean, Japanese), Southeast Asians (Cambodian, Laotian, Vietnamese), and Indian. Individuals may identify as Asian, one of the sub communities, or specific ethnicities (Hoeffel, Rastogi, Kim, & Shahid, H. (2012).

Asian identity was created outside of Asia, and the development of the Asian American identity occurred on college campuses in the U.S. This identity was created to unite people of Asian descent to combat racial oppression (Aguirre & Lio, 2008; Weber, 2006). At times, there has been a call to scholars to disaggregate the Asian American Pacific Islanders to better understand specific ethnic groups (Museus & Truong, 2009), as well as understanding that Asian Americans do not see themselves as being the one monolithic group. Understandably, they do not have a common attitude towards education (Lee, 1994). However, it is imperative that scholars understand the historical and political underpinnings of the Asian American community. The tension exists in how Asian American Pacific Islanders see themselves as a diverse group and the dominant (or hegemonic) perspectives of AAPIs as a homogenous group.

Many students claim an Asian American identity because the United States is the only home they know and the space that they occupy daily (Takaki, 1989). Asia becomes part of the family history. Being Asian American allows individuals to occupy a position of claiming both the Asia history of immigration and other policies while informing others their permanent home as America (Wong, 2011). Even though the words Asian American & Pacific Islander may not be perfect, many individuals recognize the importance of sociopolitical movements in response to racism and discrimination (Omi & Winant, 1994).

Research Challenges of AAPI

Compared to other racialized groups in higher education scholarship, there has been proportionally less scholarship (Museus & Kiang, 2009) on AAPIs. Policymakers, practitioners, and scholars have not been as conscious of AAPI issues. One of the major contributing factors is that AAPIs do not face challenges (model minority myth), which is simply not true (Museus & Chang; 2010; Museus & Kiang).

Due to the lack of consciousness of issues pertaining to the AAPI community, there is a lack of financial resources to facilitate scholarship. Grants and contracts have taken greater importance in the academy (including financial reasons or tenure and promotion purposes), so the lack of grants towards AAPI research has far reaching consequences. It will be interesting to observe funding agencies future plans regarding the AAPI community as the fastest growing group in the America. For many scholars Asian American Pacific Islanders are successful and therefore do not need any interventions or deeper understanding of their experiences. The Asian American Pacific Islander community is complex and therefore should not be label as the model minority (Chou & Feager, 2008).

Bimodal Distribution

Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders are seen as incredibly successful. Whether it includes “Whiz Kids” (Time Magazine, 1988), “Tiger Moms” (Chua, 2012), or the omnipresent model minority (Chou & Feager, 2008), many perceive all AAPIs to be well educated and wealthy. The typical facts presented are overwhelmingly

positive, such as Asian Americans are overrepresented at elite institutions (Egan, 2007). Another example is Asian Americans tend to come from two parent homes, spend more time doing homework, attend more academically focused extracurricular activities, and Asian American parents expect more from their children (Peng & Wright, 1994).

However, Asian Americans' wealth and education levels are bimodal. Bimodal distribution of Asian Americans means proportionally far more people are above and below the average and very few people in the middle (Hu, 1989). Even though there is bimodal distribution of educational levels, AAPI's are perceived only at the high achieving mode and the less achieving mode does not receive any media attention (Delucci & Do, 1996).

For AAPIs, the difference in educational attainment is socioeconomic class. AAPI students with parents with less education tend to reproduce their parents' success levels (Lee & Kumashiro, 2005). Even taking ethnic group differences into account, class is a very good predictor of education attainment. For example, Chinese Americans (from high SES families) tend to be more likely attend elite and private institutions. However, Chinese Americans (from low SES families) tend to have the lowest rates of private institutions compare to all other ethnic groups within AAPI community (Teranishi, Ceja, Antonio, Allen, & McDonough, 2004). For Filipinos and Southeast Asians, parents' income level was the largest predictor of selective institutions' attendance (Teranishi et al, 2004).

Bimodal distribution is a challenge for policymakers, practitioners, and scholars to understand and create policy or programs that will help students from the

lower SES. However, Yeh (2002) proposed admissions and outreach counselors need to focus on Asian Americans from low income and educationally underserved backgrounds. Further, Yeh encouraged scholars to better understand Asian Americans who live at home and work extra hours to support their families. For students whose parents have received less formal education, they turn to instructors and advisors for academic support (Chang, 2005). Another part of the bimodal distribution is centered through ethnic divisions. Southeast Asians and Pacific Islanders tend to be at the lower mode of the bimodal distribution.

Southeast Asians & Pacific Islanders. Recently, research has identified Southeast Asians and Pacific Islanders as very different from other Asian Americans, due to their high rates of poverty and low rates of educational attainment (Care Report, 2011; Suzuki, 2002). For far too long, the clumping of all Asian American and Pacific Islanders has hidden the wide variation of experiences and needs along ethnic lines (Ng, Lee, & Pak, 2007). One of the ways in which ethnic group differentiated is college choice process (Lew, Chang, & Wang, 2005). However, statistics only reveal the end result of that decision and not the reasoning behind the differences.

Historically, Southeast Asians could be divided into two groups, pre and post 1980's. The pre 1980's Southeast Asian immigrants were highly educated, and accustomed to western culture. However, the post 1980's immigrants were not and have struggled in U.S. Even more specifically, Southeast Asian men have struggled to find their space to succeed. Due to nativism and racism, Southeast Asian men

have been perceived as violent and savages; therefore they are not prepared for education (Lei, 2003).

Pacific Islanders have also been clumped into the model minority when they have struggled with educational attainment. Pacific Islanders include Guamanians, Native Hawaiians, Tongans, and Samoans. For several Pacific Islander communities, approximately 50% of college students do not graduate (Care Report, 2011). Pacific Islanders and Southeast Asians are part of the AAPI community but they have been overshadowed and their issues have been ignored.

One should understand that prejudices exist among Asian Americans and Pacific Islander community and in many ways both Pacific Islanders and Southeast Asians are subordinated groups (Wong, 2011). Chhuon, Hudley, Brenner, and Macias (2010) wrote about Cambodian Americans- but it may pertain to other Southeast Asians and Pacific Islanders- and how they are in a “precarious position... perceived by policy makers as part of the Asian ‘model minority’ and yet often endure lower expectations from teachers and counselors” (p.53).

AAPI and Community Colleges

Community colleges have and will continue to be a pathway for underserved students of color. However, in the consciousness of higher education scholars, AAPIs attending community colleges do not fit (Lew, Chang, & Wang, 2005). In fact, the largest sector, 47%, of AAPI college enrollment has been the community colleges. Not only that, AAPI enrollment growth in community colleges is almost twice as great compared to AAPI enrollment growth in the university sector (Care

Report, 2011). Most recently, fifteen institutions were identified as Asian American Native Hawaiians Pacific Islander Serving Institutions, AANHPIs, and nine of them were community colleges (Care Report, 2011).

Like other community college students, AAPI students were more likely to be underprepared in English and Mathematics. Many lack a high school degree. They have dependents and work full time. Limited English skills has been one of the greater challenges due to the fact that many AAPI community college students identify as immigrants (Lew, Chang, & Wang, 2005). Remedial education becomes much more critical in helping AAPI community college students adjust to academic rigor at the postsecondary level (Yeh, 2002).

In comparison to AAPIs who begin their postsecondary education at a university, AAPI community college students are more likely to be part time students (63%) and they tend to be older, the median age is 27. Although the perception of AAPI students as traditional age and attending highly selective institutions permeates through society, AAPI community colleges exhibit traits much more like their peers at the community colleges (Care Report, 2011). Although this study is centered on transfer function, it would be interesting to understand how AAPIs may be navigating through vocational education (Asian Pacific American Legal Center & Asian American Justice Center, 2011) specifically for individuals where English is too great of a barrier for transferring. Further, AAPIs must navigate through community colleges sorting function and further illumination of this journey would add to the literature around AAPIs and vocational education.

Community colleges need to consider how to better serve the growing AAPI student community. Over half of all AAPI college students were non-native speakers and many attend community colleges. They must face linguistic barriers and navigating multiple cultures (home culture, school culture, and others) (Lee & Kumashiro, 2005). In navigating postsecondary education with limited English skills, they may be less likely to reach out to faculty and administrators for assistance. Specifically, they were the least likely, of all racialized groups, to interact with faculty members (Chang, 2005).

Asian American Pacific Islanders has always been a complex group with divergent needs and vary in language skills and academic preparation. Tsuda (2005) refers to AAPI community college students as *moving targets*, because its experiences vary greatly. As the AAPI community college student population grows, their needs continued to shift and change. Community colleges should begin by collecting data by disaggregating AAPIs, by ethnicity, language skills, socioeconomic status, and aspirations (Lew, Chang, & Wang, 2005).

Myth of the Model Minority and the Yellow Peril

In comparison to AAPIs participation in community colleges, much more has been written about the myth of the model minority. In many ways, the myth of the model minority and yellow peril are two sides of the same coin. The myth, a term coined in the late 60's, stated how Asian Americans do not have issues living in the U.S. and have assimilated to achieve success, educationally, economically, and other ways (Chou & Feager, 2008). Yellow Peril was developed earlier and implied

that individuals of Chinese descent (and then expanded to Asian American communities) were conniving and tricky and will take advantage of innocent White people. Kawai (2005) argued, “People of Asian descent become the model minority when they are depicted to do better than other racial minority groups, whereas they become the yellow peril when they are described to outdo White Americans” (p.115).

In many ways, the myth of the model minority has very little to do with the Asian American and Pacific Islander community’s voice. Historically, the term came from a White journalist, and it was meant to be a compliment. However, the term was coined to differentiate the “good” minority (Asian Americans) and the “bad” minority (African Americans) (Kawaguchi, 2003; Kim, 1999; Lee, 2006).

The *positive* connotation of the myth of the model minority, is covertly presenting another message. For example, designating Asian Americans as good at math and science may evolve into labeling AAPIs as “nerds” and then branding them as lacking people skills (Cole, 2009; Pyke & Dang, 2003). Thus mainstream media presents AAPIS as only capable of performing technical duties.

The myth of the model minority limits the development of leadership skills and communication skills (Suzuki, 2002). In many ways, the lack of leadership skills has serious ramifications for AAPI professional development. In the corporate world, the lack of leadership skills may prevent AAPI from moving into management positions and limit earning potentials. The lack of leadership skills would then be interpreted as AAPIs as less assertive and reinforcing the idea that AAPIs are passive and foreign to American corporate culture (Aguirre & Lio, 2008; Pyke & Dang, 2003).

The effect the myth of the model minority has been negative on the Asian American & Pacific Islander community. Museus and Chang (2009) described the myth of the model minority as a burden on scholars wanting to conduct research on AAPIs. The burden has been describing it, explaining how the AAPI community did not claim it, and denying it. An even greater burden is doing having to repeat the process several times. Another duty is the need to explain how this is a racist attack and not praise. More disturbing is how some AAPIs buy into it and then are frustrated when they do not meet others' (and potentially their own) expectations.

Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders have been caught in a difficult cycle of wanting to live up to the myth and never feeling like they do (Conchas & Perez, 2003; Kobayashi, 1999; Lee, 1994; Suzuki, 2002). For high achieving students, their academic performance is expected. For students who do not achieve education success, they feel embarrassed and depressed. Specifically, Suzuki (2002) highlighted how teachers, administrators, and parents have unrealistic expectations and AAPI students suffer from the pressures and want to drop out.

AAPIs face consequences due to the myth of the model minority, but there have been structural issues to consider. The myth of model minority started in the 1960's but in the 1980's (during an economic recession) the myth was reinvigorated and the fear of Asian Americans *overtaking* college campuses were developed more fully (Kim, 1999). The myth shifts the focus from structural issues that perpetuate racism and hierarchy and focus more on individual effort. The individual effort then reinforces the idea that meritocracy exists in society when in reality Asian Americans, who have been struggling, cannot receive assistance.

The myth of the model minority is explored through the next sub sections: (a) affirmative and negative actions, (b) racial discrimination, lingering stereotypes, and campus climates, (c) depression, (d) family support and immigrant narratives and (e) academic majors and occupation choices.

Affirmative action and negative action. “Affirmative action’ means positive steps taken to increase the representation of women and minorities in areas of employment, education, and business from which they have been historically excluded” (Fullinwider, 2011). Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders have been caught in the middle of the debate regarding affirmative action. Most recently, 28 Asian American groups (such as Japanese American Citizens League, the National Federation of Filipino American Associations, and the Organization of Chinese Americans) supported applying race to admissions. In contrast, a national federation of over 200 Indian American groups has urged the U.S. Supreme Court to end race-conscious college admissions (Schmidt, 2012). Some Indian Americans feel that they are being targeted for negative action. The term *negative action* is when a university denies admission to an Asian American Pacific Islander who would have been admitted if that person were White or any other race (Kang, 1996). Their race was no longer being acknowledged for their historical exclusion in higher education. Their race became a hindrance in their pursuit of admission.

The heart of the matter is affirmative action, which historically, was used as a way to secure a minimum number of students of color who have been denied access, to provide a “floor” for representation. The debate of Asian Americans can depict them as working against other racially minoritized groups, such as African

Americans or Latina/os. In reality, Asian Americans seldom compete with other racialized minorities for admission because they have not been given *preference* in admissions (Suzuki, 2002; Wang, 1995). With that mentality, AAPIs may perceive other students of color as inferior to them and self-marginalize (Inkelas, 2003). In fact, institutions do not give preferential treatment to Asian Americans because they have been perceived as the model minority (Suzuki, 2002).

With respect to Asian Americans, affirmative action has created an enrollment ceiling, which limits their representation (Kahlenberg, 2012). In many ways, affirmative action practices have been viewed as racist because Asian Americans may view it as a way for the dominant group, White people, who have the power, to create policies that limit Asian (American) enrollment. There was a study that highlighted White students complaining about Asian students taking over college campuses (Wu, 1995). In many ways, there is a fear of *Asians taking over*. Due to that fear, some people feel that there should be a limit on the number of Asian students. Currently, the admission office has been perceived as admitting too many Asians and thus Asians no longer need affirmative action.

In connection to fear of Asian (Americans) taking control of college campuses is tied to historical themes of yellow peril, which is fear that Asians will possess economic and political ground greater than White people (Wang, 1995). As explained previously, *negative action* is when a university denies admission to an Asian American Pacific Islander who would have been admitted if that person were White (Kang, 1996). Not surprisingly, when Asian Americans hear narratives of

people who have a less rigorous academic record being admitted, feelings of frustration develop.

Inkelas (2003) asserted that Asian Americans “feel resentful about their chances for college admission, given that they receive neither advantages inherent to the dominant group (e.g. legacy admissions), nor those accorded to other subordinate groups (e.g., affirmative action)” (p.640). However the focus should include structural issues pertaining to all racialized groups. Asian Americans are perceived as not needing structural support by insinuating that they are the *good minority* whom achieved success and weakens the arguments surrounding affirmative action.

While scholars continue to debate how AAPIs fit in within the realm of affirmative action, AAPIs only feel frustrated that their voices have been left out (Lee, 2006). This study focuses on AAPI community college transfer students, and they need the structural support as they aspire to attain a baccalaureate. At several points in history, AAPIs have been excluded from education and business. Affirmative action is about redressing the exclusion and yet only negative action is being applied.

Racial Discrimination, Lingering Stereotypes, and Campus Climate. For Asian American Pacific Islander students, affirmative action sets the tone for how they're perceived in higher education. Many faculty members, administrators, and students misperceive them as problem free and one of the minority groups that do not experience racism (Aguirre & Lio, 2008; Delucci & Do, 1996; Kawaguchi, 2003; Kotori & Malaney, 2003; Vo, 2004). Several of the studies alluded to the connections

with the myth of model minority and how AAPIs were receiving acts of hostility from students of other racialized groups.

One study highlighted the eight major themes of stereotypes or acts of discrimination enacted towards AAPIs: “(a) alien in own land, (b) ascription of intelligence, (c) exoticization of Asian women, (d) invalidation of interethnic differences, (e) denial of racial reality, (f) pathologizing cultural values/communication styles, (g) second class citizenship, and (h) invisibility” (Sue, Bucceri, Lin, Nadal, & Torino, 2007, p.72). Although all eight themes could be explored much further. The authors of the study were intentional in explaining that not all AAPI experience all eight stereotypes. In fact, AAPI students understood that many comments were made unintentionally and they struggle whether or not they should confront individuals. Further, they learned from previous experiences that confronting the racist comments led to others labeling them as *paranoid*. The power of racism not only lies in hate speech and violence, it is the psychological effect of believing in the inferiority of one’s identification of racialized group.

Pyke and Dang (2003) were able to identify terminology that touches on the eight major themes of stereotypes that many people including AAPIs use, such as FOB (Fresh Off the Boat) and Whitewashed. Such terminology was developed to differentiate between foreign born and native born individuals. In comparison, the term Asian Americans were developed on college campuses to create unity among the many ethnic groups tied to the geography of Asia (Takaki, 1989). FOB denoted individuals who identify more with the *Asian* and Whitewashed identified individuals who associate themselves with *American*. Similar to the term Asian, FOB is a term

developed in the U.S. Both terms, FOB and Whitewashed, possessed negative connotations and create a dichotomy in which Asian Americans must choose to be more ethnic traditionalists and criticize individuals who were less familiar with ethnic customs or identify as Whites and superiority over their ethnic traditionalists. This binary created divides and did not allow for individuals to embrace their histories and current perspectives.

Not surprisingly, stereotypes and racism exist within and beyond the AAPI community and combine that with the debate surrounding model minority and affirmative action, AAPI students struggle on a college campus. Kotori and Malaney (2003) identified that Asian Americans had more negative views of campus racial climates than any other racialized groups. Further, they were less aware of legal proceedings to document and combat a negative campus climate.

Most recently, there was an incident at University of California, Los Angeles, where a White woman posted a rant on Youtube invoking Asian stereotypes and explaining how she was incredibly frustrated. The institution was focused on condemning the individual student and did not identify structural and political issues that lead to the student outburst. For some AAPI students, life may not improve after graduation. Being discriminated against may lead to chronic conditions, such as heart disease, pain, and respiratory diseases (Gee, Spencer, Cheng, & Takeushi, 2007).

Beyond the physical chronic conditions, students of color have discussed the tensions of being the bearer of *knowledge about race*. Thus students of color have felt pressure to educate White peers about racial diversity (Morrison, 2010).

However, the education of White peers pales in comparison to being a person of color and seeing racism throughout the institution while White peers either deny it or do not have to face it (Morrison, 2010). The pressure of educating others and the moments of doubt regarding their perspectives at recognizing racism can be too great to navigate (Gildersleeve, Croom, & Vasquez, 2011).

Despite all this, some AAPI students use knowledge to combat a sense of helplessness. Discussions about race and racism facilitate AAPI's development of coping mechanisms to face a negative campus climate, stereotypes, and racism (Alvarez, Juang, & Liang, 2006). One of the ways to tackle racism is to further understand historical contexts. It is crucial for minoritized populations (including students of color, LGBTQIA, women, individuals with disabilities, and many others) to learn about their communities' contributions to society. The learning of history for AAPI communities provides a space to understand how they have been marginalized and recognized the contributions of AAPI community to see that they are a significant part of America (Aguirre & Lio, 2008; Inkelas, 2003; Lee & Kumashiro, 2005; Lewis, 2003; Takaki, 1989).

For AAPI students who attend a more racially diverse campus (even if the institution enrolled a smaller group of AAPI students), they were more satisfied with campus climate (Chang, 2005; Park, 2009). Other ways to combat a negative campus climate is for AAPI students to develop leadership skills. Specifically, leadership development in ethnic co-curricular activities facilitated AAPI students' racial identity development (Alvarez, 2002; Kawaguchi, 2003; Inkelas, 2004; Suzuki, 2002). The participation and leadership development within ethnic co-curricular

would be a starting point for institutional leaders to explore. As educators, scholars, practitioners, and policymakers, campus climate has a significant impact on students' aspirations and achievement attainment. Regardless of institutional types or the racial diversity at the institution, a negative campus climate was predictive of Asian American students' levels of depression (Cress & Ikeda, 2003).

Depression. Asian Americans Pacific Islanders have been identified as more depressed, experience more social anxiety, and more socially withdrawn than their White counterparts (Chang, 1996; Cress & Ikeda, 2003; Okazaki, 1997). Not surprisingly when one considers the stereotypes and racism AAPIs face daily. In fact, specific segments of AAPI community face even greater levels of depression. Vietnamese Americans suffer a higher level of depression compared to other AAPI ethnic groups (Ong & Phinney, 2002). The reason for the greater levels of depression is unknown. However, there seems to be a connection with American perceptions of the Vietnam War. Further, Asian American males tend to be more likely to suffer from depression compared to females (Cress & Ikeda, 2003).

Even more troubling fact has been their lack of reaching out for help. Out of all the racialized groups, Asian Americans were the least likely to report depression (Johnson, Takesue, & Chen, 2007; Zhao & Qui, 2009). One of the reasons for not reaching out to professionals for assistance is the connection to the myth of the model minority. Asian American students feel as though their academic struggles should be hidden because they should be good students (Eaton & Dembo, 1997; Lee, Juon, Martinez, Hsu, Robinson, Bawa, & Ma, 2008). Their fear of academic

failure combined with navigating multiple cultures creates conditions that may force students to bear the burden alone.

In facing depression, one study found that AAPI students who were more connected to their ethnic communities were more willing to seek help from community elders, religious leaders, student organizations, and religious groups (Solberg, Choi, Ritsma, & Jolly, 1994). However, student affairs practitioners should be paying more attention to signs of distress.

In 2007, Seung-Ui Cho committed the deadly shooting rampage in Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University. Very quickly, the media began to report on his mental health and connection to his race. A scholar noted that with that violent incident, not only are AAPIs labeled as model minority and taking over the college campus (yellow peril), AAPI college students must face the identity as a potential shooter on their campus (Song, 2008). This is the power of racialized identity in the U.S. When one member of the community commits an act of violence, the entire community is on alert.

As sad as that moment of violence was, it felt as though higher education community was finally recognizing the troubles and problems of AAPI's lack of mental health support. Practitioners need to be conscious of the many forces that affect AAPI's mental health, such as obligations to family, others' expectations, and feeling disengagement with ethnic customs (Kawaguchi, 2003). Educators need to be more aware of culturally relevant interventions, such as helping students navigate personal interests, family obligations, and racialized stereotypes.

Family Support and Immigrant Narratives. Family plays a large role in some AAPI communities. For many AAPI students, their education is tied into immigrant narratives and family sacrifice. Park (2008) highlighted that for many AAPI students, narratives regarding immigration is centered on two themes: (a) parents came to this country so the children can receive an education and (b) parents experience hardships but their children's successes made it worthwhile. Potentially, this narrative has more to do with how dominant discourse has framed Asian immigration (post 1965) than parents and family members sharing their experiences. Rather it is planted through dominant discourse and/or voices of the community, sacrifice for and by family members continue to influence AAPI students.

Asian Americans students, compare to White students, have a greater tendency to self-sacrifice for their family members, especially for their parents (Suzuki & Greenfield, 2002). For some Asian Americans who are immigrants or children of immigrants, they serve as the cultural broker to other family members (Kim, Brenner, Liang, & Asay, 2003) and they may serve as the linguistic interpreter for many social and economic problems (Conchas & Perez, 2003). Their sacrifices are not simply tied to choice, but connected to structural issues that their families face.

In one study focused on Cambodian Americans, the researchers were able to identify the responsibilities of wanting to serve the family through acting as the role model for younger siblings and cousins and navigating through the lack of information their parents and family members can provide about education (Chhuon, Hudley, Brenner, and Macias, 2010). In many ways, family provides support, but the

overall circumstances make it difficult for AAPI students to navigate their educational systems.

Most of the family literature regarding AAPI communities is centered on immigration. There seems to be a lack of research on family dynamics for AAPI families that have been in the U.S. for several generations. Family support may be tied to structural challenges that recent immigrants must face and the longer the family has been in the U.S., the less responsibilities AAPI students shoulder for their families.

Academic majors and occupation choices. Family plays a role in AAPIs' life in ways that impact academic majors and occupation choices. Takaki (1989) explained that from the first Asian migrant labor forces to the latest wave of immigrants, economics played a major role in pushing people of Asian descent to come to the U.S. In furthering the conversation around the myth of the model minority, Asians (Americans) were seen as more likely to pursue science, math, and other technical jobs (Cole, 2009; Pyke & Dang, 2003). However, this perspective is likely ahistorical. For example, Takaki (1989) explained that the first group of Asian immigrants was either labor workers –some in the Hawaii fields- or merchants. The 1882 Exclusion Act shaped AAPI communities; it forced segregation and limited occupation choices (Aguirre & Lio, 2008). In fact, during the 1950's, the first group of Asian students who had access to higher education was international students from Taiwan. This access to higher education shifted some Asians from low paying service employment to other sectors. Ogbu (1983) explained that between 1944 and

1965, only highly educated immigrants from China, professionals in technical fields, were allowed to immigrate to the U.S.

Asian American and Pacific Islanders tend to choose occupations where they can cope with discrimination by striving for credentials (academic majors) that require less on connections and more on technical knowledge (Ogbu, 1983). This knowledge was learned from previous generations of Asian Americans, who strived to break through to nontechnical fields. The knowledge of combating discrimination using technical credentials has been passed onto younger generations (Tang, Fouad & Smith, 1999). Asian Americans tend to choose majors with higher average earnings as a way to achieve economic equality rather than political equality (Xie & Goyette, 2003). In understanding how many Asian immigrants came to this country for economic benefits, it is not surprising for Asian Americans, who at several moments throughout American history were denied lucrative careers, to pursue careers with higher financial payoffs and perceived lower rates of discrimination.

Even though the pursuit of more technical knowledge was used as a way to combat discrimination, another image of passive Asian technician and lack of leadership stereotype led to the formation of a glass ceiling (Cole, 2009; Pyke & Dang, 2003). Thus it is crucial for counselors and advisors to consider how to best serve AAPI students in their pursuit of academic majors and careers. Counselors need to take into consideration the students' interests and knowledge base, family aspirations, and potential discrimination issues that they may face (Leong, Kao, & Lee, 2004; Tang, Fouad, & Smith; 1999).

Race and Racialization

Asian is not an ethnic group; it is a box that many people of ethnic descent from the continent of Asia check off on applications. Although race has become a variable or a label for individuals to check off on a form, it is the social interactions through social institutions that create race, racialization, and racism. The idea of race and racialization is laden with history and socially constructed hierarchies of domination, power, and privilege (Weber, 2006). Asian Americans, the phrase was created on a college campus in the 1960's to unite the Asian diaspora. The concepts "Yellow is beautiful" and "Yellow Power" were sayings to unite Asian Americans. In many ways, the racialized category was a way to recognize how the diaspora was being included and excluded as one community (Lewis, 2003). The racialization of Asian American /Pacific Islanders has continued to shift and will not be stagnant.

Racial triangulation. Kim (1999) stated that Asian Americans have been compared to White and Black people and therefore their positions are triangulated. This process is called *racial triangulation*. The racial triangulation process includes two themes. The first is *relative valorization* that Asian Americans are superior to African Americans, whether it is cultural or economical. The second is the process of *civic ostracism*, where people construct Asian Americans as foreign and inassimilable with Whites on cultural grounds (Kim, 1999). It is important to note that the two processes may not be supported by facts but through the legitimacy of the people who share those opinions, such as "White elected officials, journalists, scholars, community leaders, and business leaders" (Kim, 1999, p. 106). The first step of

racial triangulation is correlated with the model minority and the second step is connected with yellow peril (Kawai, 2005; Lee, 2006).

Racialization of Asian Americans, whether it is the myth of the model minority, recognizing the diversity within the AAPI communities, or understanding their educational experiences, will continue to be a process. Thus, for Asian Americans, the need to critically understand their positionality in society and give voice to their experiences. Fittingly, Critical Race Theory (CRT) will be the main theoretical framework for this study.

Critical Race Theory

Critical race theory is defined as the “radical legal movement that seeks to transform the relationship among race, racism, and power” (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001, p. 144). Yosso (2005) further defined CRT in education as, “a theoretical and analytical framework that challenges the ways race and racism impact educational structures, practices, and discourses” (p. 74). Critical Race Theory has six main tenets:

1. Critical race theory recognizes that racism is endemic to American life.
2. Critical race theory expresses skepticism toward dominant legal claims of neutrality, objectivity, colorblindness and meritocracy.
3. Critical race theory challenges ahistoricism and insists on a contextual/historical analysis of the law ... Critical race theorists ... adopt a stance that presumes that racism has contributed to all contemporary manifestations of group advantage and disadvantage.

4. Critical race theory insists on recognition of the experiential knowledge of people of color and our communities of origin in analyzing law and society.
5. Critical race theory is interdisciplinary.
6. Critical race theory works toward the end of eliminating racial oppression as part of the broader goal of ending all forms of oppression. (Matsuda, Lawrence, Delgado, & Crenshaw, 1993, p.6).

Tenet 1: Racism is endemic.

Each of the themes of CRT was a guiding force for the study. For example, the first theme of CRT is the normality of racism in America. As stated in previous sections, AAPI students face racism and stereotypes on college campuses. One of the most challenging aspects is that administrators and practitioners may not understand nor see the racism that AAPIs face (Suzuki, 2002). Utilizing CRT in this study, the focus will not be on justifying students' impression of racism but understanding and providing a space for students to share their narratives.

With racism, classism, sexism, and all of the other kind of *isms*, it is far too difficult to prove claims, because all of those social structures have been centered on personal identities, power, and privilege (Weber, 2006). The power in CRT is not defining racism for every racially minoritized group. The power in CRT belongs to the ideological sense that racism is normal and ingrained into our collective memory and structures, such as higher education.

Tenet 2: Skeptic towards Legal Claims of Neutrality, Objectivity, Colorblindness, and Meritocracy

One of the focuses of this study sought to understand how AAPI transfer students perceive and comprehend affirmative action policies. Although some studies have identified Asian Americans succeeding without the use of race-conscious policies and specifically Indian-American groups have called for the use of race-neutral policies (Schmidt, 2012), CRT recognizes the covert use of colorblindness. Rather than claiming objectivity, CRT requires scholars to be skeptical and find out which interests are converging when people of color are receiving certain benefits (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). This concept of interest convergence illuminates hidden agendas. Although much of this research study centered on voice (which will be discuss in tenet 4), it is crucial to include materialist understanding of CRT.

Tenet 3: Challenges ahistoricism and Tenet 5: Interdisciplinary

One of the aspects of studying Asian Americans is the importance of understanding history, economics, political science, ethnic studies and Asian American Studies. Within the literature review, I have tried to include multiple disciplines. Rather than using literature from the field of education and applying that lens to the analysis, it is crucial to view policy with other lenses.

In studying AAPI students, the importance of studying immigration patterns and historical events in the global context that affects migration patterns would ameliorate the disjointedness of understanding AAPIs. For example, AAPIs have a

higher percentage of pursuing STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) and it is connected with AAPIs resistance towards racism by possessing more technical knowledge (Tang, Fouad & Smith, 1999). The number of AAPIs choosing STEM occupations is also tied to immigration policies that only allowed well educated professionals with technical skills to immigrate to America is less known (Takaki, 1989). The importance of placing political context to AAPI transfer students' narratives of immigration or situating English Language Learners' barriers with state politics surrounding *No Child Left Behind*. Further, the use of situating personal narratives into political realm will highlight the economic consequences of racism. Racism is not only about how people feel and think, there have been material consequences.

Tenet 4: Recognition of Experimental Knowledge of People of Color

The importance of having been silenced for many generations, Asian Americans have been discovering their missing narratives and voices. Takaki (1989) discussed the importance of *breaking silences* and sharing painful experiences for AAPIs and others to understand their journey. From Japanese Americans' internment experiences to AAPIs trying to break through the glass ceiling, silence should not be tolerated.

AAPIs are often part of majoritarian narratives which center on Whiteness or meritocracy. However, the use of counterstorytelling or counternarratives which derive from data gathered from the research process, existing literature, and the researchers' personal and professional experiences (Solorzano & Yosso, 2001).

Counternarratives challenge racism and other forms of oppression. Bell (1987) uses creative writing, fiction weaving in personal experiences, to encourage readers to try to understand dilemmas and situations dealing with racism. Through voices of minoritized individuals, the structures of racism are highlighted and challenged. Therefore, using a qualitative approach, specifically phenomenology, is of utmost importance to understand AAPI transfer students' experiences.

Tenet 6: Eliminating Racial Oppression as part of Ending Oppression

I struggle with this idea because the first tenet of CRT is the normality and endemic nature of racism. But I truly do believe that scholarship on racialized groups should be socially just and gathering deeper meaning to social constructs. Rendon (2009) connects social justice scholarship to liberation. I do not see this study as eliminating racial oppression or ending oppression. However, I do see it as a step in illuminating AAPI experiences and challenging the current perceptions of AAPIs in higher education.

Intersectionality

Critical Race Theory was the main theoretical framework for this study. Additionally, I recognized the importance of class, particularly as it pertains to community college and transfer students. However, identities are not singular, and all have intersecting identities that influence who we are and our positionalities. Intersectionality recognized that one framework, be it race, gender, sexual orientation, and any other identity cannot fully explain someone's experiences (Crenshaw, 1991).

For example, Maramba (2008) focused on Filipinas experiences in higher education and recognized their roles in their families. They had additional responsibilities compared to Filipinos, experienced tensions in their pursuit of the baccalaureate, due to time management and family expectations. The tension was not created by race *or* gender; the tension was with their race *and* gender as they navigated through higher education.

This research study focused on AAPI transfer students, with an emphasis on race and class. I viewed the participants as holistic individuals with many identities, including gender (Cho, 2003), sexual orientation (Lee & Kumashiro, 2005; Kumashiro, 1999), ability, and any other identity that the participants shared. People have complex identities and the participants brought their whole selves to the experiences they shared.

Summary

Community colleges serve students who may not have access to other avenues in higher education. The transfer function, although highly debated, is one of many ways for students to pursue their baccalaureate. Despite the literature of understanding AAPI students as underserved, the myth of model minority has been the glass ceiling that much of AAPI scholarship is trying to break through. The racialized community of AAPIs has only begun to share their voices.

Utilizing Critical Race Theory and intersectionality, this study provided a space for AAPI transfer students to share their experiences. In Chapter 3, more details regarding the study methodology, researcher's roles, participant and site

selection, research methods, trustworthiness, ethical issues and considerations, delimitations and limitations was identified.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

If a story is not about the hearer he will not listen. And here I make a rule- a great and interesting story is about everyone or it will not last.

East of Eden

This chapter provides an overview of the research methods that was used to investigate the academic, social, and cultural factors that affect AAPI transfer students at a predominantly white institution. In particular, this study investigated the experiences, academically and socially, that challenge and enhance their journey towards pursuing their baccalaureate. Phenomenological research centers on the essence of a phenomenon from the perspective of the people who experienced it (Merriam, 2002). In this study, I explored AAPI postsecondary educational experiences, such as community college and four year university as well as the transfer experience to a predominantly White institution (PWI). The chapter begins with the study's epistemological position, followed by the researcher's positionality, a description of the research site, data collection procedures, data analysis, trustworthiness, ethical considerations and the limitations and strengths of the study.

Epistemological Position and Positionality

This study used a qualitative research approach to explore AAPI transfer students' experiences, at the community college and four year university as well as transfer experience. Qualitative research draws from several disciplines, such as sociology, psychology, anthropology, and others that describe meaning as socially constructed by each person's interaction with his or her world (Merriam, 2002). In many ways, this study is centered on constructionism, which focuses on the many

processes that create meaning and the belief that each person creates his or her own separate meaning (Crotty, 1998). Although all of the participants identified as Asian American transfer students, each person came with his or her interpretation of their experiences. Further, Crotty described constructionism as a way to understand human and social realities through lived experiences.

Crotty (1998) shared that an interpretive approach is crucial to understanding the social world because we all come to co-construct and reconstruct the meanings around us. One of the ways to understand how individuals construct the world around them is through personal narratives. Merriam (2002) defined phenomenological research as trying to understand from those who experienced the phenomenon.

As this study focused on a marginalized population, the use of Critical Race Theory (CRT) was instrumental in understanding how race and racism may have affected the students. Therefore, CRT served as the primary theoretical framework for this research study. Critical Race Theory contains several main concepts, the most central would be that racism is embedded in the fabric of American society (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012) and it contains several more tenets to be explored in this study. Further, the study of transfer students included other factors of transitioning to a new environment, such as the four year university. Further intersectionality was an important analytical lens to understand students' experiences.

Researcher's Role

In this qualitative study, I was the primary data gathering tool. I did not separate myself from the research process; objectivity was not possible (Esterberg, 2002; Merriam, 2002). The purpose of qualitative research is not to generalize the knowledge, but to gain a deeper understanding. Due to the personal nature of qualitative nature, I needed to recognize, comprehend, and navigate my positionality as the researcher during the study.

As a Chinese American woman, who checks off the Asian box on applications, I wish for more literature about AAPI students and their experiences in higher education. I grew up reading some fictional stories about AAPIs, including The Joy Luck Club, Thousand Pieces of Gold, and several others. However, my formal education lacked AAPI voices. During my master's degree coursework, I learned about academic scholarship surrounding higher education and I did not see that many pieces of literature about AAPI experiences. I began to consider and hope to add to the literature about AAPI experiences in higher education.

I was not a full time community college student and but I did transfer coursework from a community college to a four year institution. My older sister attended a community college full time and she was the first in my family to attend college. As a child, I knew community colleges were an affordable way to pursue a college degree. I did not know about the associate's degrees or the technical and vocational pathways. My dad worked as a janitor at a community college and he did not want my older sister to attend a community college. However, it was never clear to me the reasons for his opposition. However, my other sisters and I have been

attending community colleges since high school. Once my older sister was in college, she encouraged us to start taking classes at the community college, especially if the course was unavailable in high school. Even as a student at a university, I attended community colleges during the summer to complete general education requirements and to lighten the course load during the academic year.

One of my best friends attended a community college for four years and then transferred to a baccalaureate institution and needed another four years to receive her degree in chemical engineering. All of this provided a personal connection for me to learn more about Asian Pacific Islander transfer students.

In addition to personal connections, I have had the privilege of studying community college and transfer student issues. One of the studies that I contributed to was a national study on Pell Grants and the increase in full time enrollment due to the increase in Pell Grants. This study provided an understanding on policy analysis focused on low-income students at community colleges as well as the need connect scholarship and research to policy. One of the aspects of the Pell Grant study that I will always value is the importance delineating the differences between rural (small, medium, large size campuses), suburban (small, medium, and large size campuses), and urban (single and multiple campuses).

Secondly, I am part of a team of evaluators assessing a national initiative to provide low costs textbook alternative coursework, Project SIRIUS. This work has made me realize how important providing access to students. Some of the students who take the courses are displace workers and/or students taking online courses for

the first time. I think the word diversity does not begin to represent the multiple experiences of community college students.

Thirdly, I participated in an assessment and evaluation of a STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) Academy at a community college in California. The academy included a three day intensive training for incoming community college students, who were interested in STEM disciplines. One of the most important aspects of this assessment was the importance of seeing and participating in dialogues with students.

Several students thought I was a community college student. As I spoke to several participants, they asked me what I *did*. I shared with all of them that I am a doctoral student, interested in studying community college and transfer students. Most of them were surprised and many did not know what research included or that many people wanted to find ways to help them be more successful in their academic progress. Others were happily surprised to know there was a world of literature about college students, and particularly about community college and transfer students. I hope my work will benefit some students, somewhere.

As I returned to the Midwest, I realized how little is known about AAPI transfer students and how little is known about AAPI students in the Midwest. I was able to complete a research project using transcript analysis to understand that AAPI students did experience transfer shock and had lower graduation rates than White students (Lui, 2013). Additionally, I began to meet with AAPI student organization at a large Midwest institution. The student organization is declining in student participation and in need of more direction. At this organization, I met a community

college student, who would be transferring the large Midwest institution and he made me realize how important it is to learn about his experience and the experiences of those around him.

Research Sites and Selection of Participants

Purposeful sampling strategies were used to select participants and this is a common approach in qualitative studies (Seidman, 2006). Specifically, purposeful sampling helps the researcher identifies participants with particular outlooks and understandings of the world around them (Esterberg, 2002). Purposeful selection was crucial because the primary goal is to understand the experiences of AAPI transfer students, who are enrolled in 4-year university. Participants described their community college student experiences, transfer process, transfer student experience, and how racialization shaped or not influenced such events.

A large, Midwest university was chosen as a research site because, little research has been done on AAPI in the Midwest and the university is a land grant institution and will further facilitate the discussion of AAPI attending institutions beyond ivy-leagues. The research site, Midwest University (a pseudonym), is a large, research intensive, land grant institution. The enrollment at Midwest University is close to 30,000 students and employs over 1,300 full and part time faculty members and offers over 100 degree programs.

I have developed relationships with AAPI students, some are native and others have been transfer students. I sent out an email to the student organization for it to be forwarded onto other AAPI students on campus. The email included a request for students to contact me if they identify as AAPI, transferred from a

community college, and are willing to participate in the study. Additionally, I sent an email out to all AAPI transfer students through the admissions office of Midwest University. The email was sent in early Fall 2012. Currently, there are approximately 150 AAPI transfer students. I ended the study with five participants. Six participants volunteered, but one participant chose not to continue with the study after the initial interview.

In the recruitment process, I employed snowball sampling techniques (Biernacki & Waldorf, 1981) in which I ask participants to refer other AAPI transfer students to me that match the selection criteria. One of the surprising ways that snowball sampling occurred was through social media. Two of the participants posted my study on Facebook and students contacted me through email. Although the sampling was small, the goal of qualitative research is to reach data saturation, in which I was able to see the same patterns and emerging themes (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Data Collection

Using a social constructionism (Crotty, 1998) epistemology, I sought to uncover how AAPI transfer students describe their postsecondary educational experiences and how racialization plays a role in their educational journey. One of the important parts of social constructionism is the understanding how society, we (the collective members of the society), identify the conditions collectively. In studying a minoritized group, I will be applying CRT, which centers race, racism, and power through economic, historical, contextual interests which include conscious and unconscious feelings (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012).

Delgado and Stefancic (2012) stated definitively that people of different races have radically different journeys. The importance of understanding different experiences which led critical race theorists to center CRT on the power of everyday experiences and stories can assist others in understand race and the impact of racialization. Stories are so powerful that in a court of law, for individuals with considerably less power, such as children who have been sexually assaulted or women who have experience domestic violence have been encouraged to share their narratives rather than subject them through question and answer format (Delgado and Stefancic).

Due to the importance of stories and experiences, phenomenological research would be an appropriate methodology to understand students' experiences. According to Meriam (2002), the central theoretical goal of phenomenology is, "its focus on describing the essence of a phenomenon from the perspectives of those who have experienced it" (p. 93).

Phenomenology research included being aware of the details of the research process. My observations of the participants during interviews and what is not being said is just as important as what is shared. Merriam (2002) explained that interviews would be a primary tool in understanding participants' experiences, "interviewing... one attempts to uncover the essence, the invariant structure, of the meaning of the experience" (p.93).

In this study, I employed a series of three semi-structured interviews with each participant. A three interview series (Seidman, 2006) was conducted to provide rich and descriptive narratives for analysis. All three of the interviews for each

participant were recorded and transcribed. Each interview was approximately 45 minutes to an hour. Only the participant and I were present during the interview. Base on the participants' schedules, I conducted all interviews on campus because I believe students were more comfortable. The broad interview topic questions (See Appendix A) was focused on understanding their postsecondary educational experiences and the intersection of racialization of their AAPI identity.

Prior to the start of the first interview, I explained the nature of the study and his or her rights as a participation in the study and obtained written consent. The first interview addressed many of the interview questions in Appendix A and gathered family background information about the participants' community college and four-year university experiences as well as their ethnicity and family immigration experiences. As noted in the literature, AAPI communities differ greatly due to ethnicity and immigration experience. Prior to the initial meeting/interview, the participants received the consent form as well as some of the questions pertaining to the first interview. The first interview was semi-structured to make the interview process more open and the participants shared their narratives. Interviews provided opportunities to for participants to ask clarifying questions or ask for more explanation of experiences to provide rich and descriptive data (Esterberg, 2002).

One of the most important aspects of first interview was to develop trust and relationship for the individual to share their experiences and understanding how trust is developing and never fully develop because of the researcher and participant role (Bloom, 2002; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). One of the advantages of the three interview

series was the time for participants to develop trust in me, as a listener and as a researcher.

Within two weeks after the first interview, the interview was transcribed and sent a copy of the transcriptions for the participant to review. I provided some notes and thoughts to my participant regarding my analysis of his or her narrative. The participants received a copy of their interview transcript and asked to check the transcript for accuracy and to provide any feedback they consider to be important for clarification. Participants were asked to explain any points they want and to make any corrections or additions to the transcripts.

The second interview was informed by the data gathered during the first interview with each of the participants and less structure than the first. The second interview took place no more than three weeks after the first interview and was scheduled when the participants were available. The second interview provided a space for participant to clarify first interview and discuss what they thought about after the first interview. The interview took approximately 45 minutes and was on campus based on the participants' availability. Similar to the first interview questions, the questions asks during the second interview focused about educational experiences and their opinions about the racialization of their pathways.

The goal of the second interview was to include more in depth questions and discussions regarding race and how they perceived their race has influenced their educational experiences. Particularly, this interview, in comparison to the first interview, was more connected to CRT and I focused on specific narratives to try to learn more about a selected number of experiences (Seidman, 2006). During the

second interview, I asked participants to provide more details to their narratives and information regarding institutional support, specifically about faculty and staff.

Within two weeks after the second interview, the students were sent a copy of the transcriptions to review. I provided some thoughts to my participant regarding my analysis of his or her narrative. The participants were asked to check the transcript for accuracy and to provide any feedback they consider to be important for clarification. Participants were asked to explain any points they want and to make any corrections or additions to the transcripts.

The third interview provided a space for participant to clarify the first and second interviews. We discussed what he or she is thinking about after the first and second interviews. In the process of sharing their narratives, they gained a deeper understanding of themselves. The third interview provided space for them to share more. The third interviews took approximately 45 minutes and occurred on campus based on the participants' availability. The third interviews were less structure than the previous two and included a discussion of emerging patterns and themes I identified. Building on the data I gathered, the third interviews were more centered on racialization and how that process plays out for AAPI transfer students, how they interacted and perceived other racialized groups, as well as intersecting identities beyond race (such as class). The topics discussed in the last interview were dependent on the narratives shared in the first two interviews.

With the three interview process, member checking was an ongoing process (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). During the interview process, I initiated member checking during the interview and encouraged the participants to provide feedback once they

received the transcripts. Prior to the third interview, I shared some ideas on initial identification of patterns or even potential themes. The participants were shown the review and coding process (will be describe in the data analysis section below) of the transcripts of the first and second interviews. They focused on the accuracy of the transcriptions. None of the participants were interested in reviewing my themes. After the third interview was completed, the participants received their final transcription.

Pseudonyms will be used for all participants in this study and were chosen by the participants. Two participants, who had names from their parents' home country, regularly used another name in class. Two students originally used such names as pseudonyms. However, once that information was shared, another name was chosen to limit the ability for others to identify the participants. Any identifying information was removed from the transcribed data to protect their anonymity (Esterberg, 2002). For example, I removed the specific names of the community colleges and I changed any names that students used to talk about their family members and identified the family members as either parents or siblings.

At Midwest University, there are 150 AAPI transfer students, so I may withhold specific information and provide general descriptions. Steps were taken to ensure the confidentiality of audio files and transcripts (Esterberg, 2002). I was the only person with access to audio files and transcripts, and they were stored in a secure location at all times when not being analyzed. Anonymity and confidentiality provisions will be addressed as part of the IRB approval process and the informed consent document.

Data Analysis

The data from this study came from the three semi-structured interviews conducted with each participant. I recorded the interviews with participant permission and produced transcripts. When interviews were used to gather data, transcripts served as a data source for analysis (Esterberg, 2002). After some of the interviews, I wrote memos of my observations, thoughts, and feelings as they surfaced to help me understand myself as a researcher and to deeply reflect on the data. The memos were used to help me document my research activities and thoughts and feelings about the collected data and emerging patterns and codes (Esterberg, 2002).

Each of the first two interviews shaped questions and discussion topics for following meeting (Seidman, 2002). Participants were provided a copy of their interview transcripts prior to subsequent interviews so they could provide further explanation of their narratives and make any corrections. I took notes, writing memos, after each transcription to take stock of my thoughts, feelings, and potential patterns. The memos served as an audit trail during the data analysis process (Esterberg, 2002; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Beyond the official memos, I kept a reflective journal or other forms of documenting my thoughts of the research and as a space to wrestle with ethical concerns and personal and professional struggles. Further, the reflective journal documented decisions regarding data analysis and other methodological activities, including emerging patterns, codes, and questions (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

When the interviews and transcriptions were completed, I immersed myself in the data to identify patterns using open coding (Esterberg, 2002). Through the open coding process, I reviewed all the transcripts again to identify patterns, codes, and potential themes. The patterns were shared with participants, but none of the participants disagreed nor challenged themes. After the open coding, I used focused coding (Esterberg, 2002) to review the transcripts again. This was much more specific and I reviewed the transcript more in depth to generate additional themes or seek out more quotes which further supported the initial themes. During this process, I sought out more principal themes and look for divergent data to complicate the findings and consider the reasons for the differences amongst participants (Creswell, 2003). For qualitative research, the point of saturation was reached when data were analyzed thoroughly with identified themes (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Data saturation was not connected to the number of participants, but the depth of the analysis of each participant's narratives as it related to the research questions.

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness is principal component of qualitative research. Lincoln and Guba (1985) identified four elements of trustworthiness: credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability.

Credibility

Credibility is prolonged engagement, persistent observation, and triangulation (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Additionally, peer debriefing provides an external check on

the inquiry process and member checking my findings and interpretations with participants will also provide more credibility (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 2002).

Prolonged engagement. The purpose of prolonged engagement was the need to build a relationship and rapport with participants and a deeper level of engagement by the researcher (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I addressed prolonged engagement with participants by explaining the challenges in speaking about certain educational experiences and I did not probe further if they let me know they are uncomfortable in sharing an experience. The intentionality behind the three interview series (Seidman, 2006) was to develop the relationship and increase the depth of the analysis to produce a credible study.

Persistent observation. Persistent observation is not centered on the participants but on the researcher being more attentive to the methodology and methods (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The audit trail of my analysis was critical and the need to write memos and journal entries to capture my decisions in coding or interpretation of participants' narratives were imperative for persistent observation of the study.

Member checking. During data analysis, I involved the participants to discuss my analysis of their narratives and to seek out feedback regarding identifying patterns, codes, and themes (Esterberg, 2002; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 2002). Member checking was accomplished in several different ways. Using Seidman's (2006) three interview process, member checking is ongoing. After each interview, I documented ideas and patterns and discussed the patterns and

codes with the participants. Specifically, the patterns guided the following interviews with each participant.

As I reflected on each participant's narratives, I was intentional in sharing my codes and explaining them to each participant. One of my goals was to provide interview transcripts and document my patterns, codes, and themes to participants. The purpose was not to seek out a consensus, but to understand the phenomenon of transferring and to provide opportunities for participants to clarify their narratives. In some ways, member checking allowed for co-construction of themes. However, the participants were not interested in my themes. They felt they were not the experts of their lived experiences. Even with multiple urgings, none of the participants were interested in discussing the codes and themes.

Peer debriefing. The primary goal of peer debriefing was to gather different perspectives about findings and data from individuals who are knowledgeable about the topic or methodology but are not actively participating in the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Further, the purpose of peer debriefing should be to help me be more conscious of my role and not allow preconceptions and emotions affect the research. However, I would argue my emotions may not only affected my research but shaped my interpretations and helped me ask more follow up questions because I care. Bloom (2002) encourages researchers to use their emotions to reflect to lead them to find new ways to collect narratives without prying into participant's lives.

The peer debriefer is a peer and challenged me on my interpretations, findings, and other decisions during the research process (Lincoln & Guba 1985).

This peer debriefer was a fellow doctoral student who has taken several qualitative

courses and critical theoretical courses. This peer debriefer and I met to discuss my research process and findings. The peer debriefer provided critical feedback. I provided supporting quotes of my themes and the peer debriefer commented on the process.

Triangulation. Using more than one source of data collection or analysis strategy would make the study more credible and that process is triangulation (Esterberg, 2002; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 2002). However, Critical Race Theorists would challenge the statement by explaining the importance and value of marginalized (in this instant, AAPI) voices have been excluded and therefore triangulation may discount marginalized voices. Although I conducted multiple interviews with multiple participants, I relied on peer debriefing and member checking strategies to make the study more credible.

Transferability

In qualitative research, transferability is the application of using findings and applying it to another context and reaching a conclusion based on thick description (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). As a researcher, I do not decide the degree of transferability; it is up to other scholars to determine if my findings provide thick descriptive data. Therefore, my responsibility consisted of providing rich descriptions with theoretically sound interpretations to bolster credibility (Merriam, 2002). Further, I hope the participants' experiences and narratives would help other scholars further their understanding of AAPI transfer students.

Dependability

In qualitative research, reliability is not possible. Bloom (2002) wrote, "... even if a story is told again and again, we cannot assume that each telling gets us closer to a final truth about an event..." (p.311). Realities are continuously being constructed and are ever changing (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). With respect to constructivism and CRT, my interpretations of narratives would be centered on my co-construction of interpretations within the confines of my relationship with the participants. The use of an audit train, to explain the process and interpretations may have created a sense of dependability, which was paramount for this study.

Confirmability

One of the most crucial aspects of trustworthiness in a qualitative study is confirmability, having an outside source conduct an audit of the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). One of the first steps towards confirmability was to document all aspects of the research process. Beyond the transcribing the interviews, I was intentional about writing memos about each interview and taking notes as I analyzed the data to capture all my decisions. Within my codes, I overlapped them to try to see which themes were connected to one another. I had an external auditor, a person who is very knowledgeable about phenomenology, CRT, and transfer student population.

Each of the strategies listed (credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability) were completed to lead to increased trustworthiness of the study. In the next section, I have identified my ethical considerations for the study which is

connected to trustworthiness but focus more on my role as the instrument of the study.

Ethical Issues and Considerations

I understand ethical issues and concerns may occur at different times during the study (Esterberg, 2002; Merriam, 2002). One of the most relevant ethical considerations for qualitative researchers was informed consent (Esterberg, 2002). Prior to the start of data collection, I shared the process of the research with people interested in participating in the study. I explained the three interview process and how they have the opportunity to provide more clarifications in their narratives and they may choose to remove themselves from the study at any point in the research. Once they chose to be participants, I secured participants' signatures for the IRB forms and provide answers to any questions they may have. I provided clarification on researcher's role, participants' roles, and plans for reporting the findings. Participants were informed of their rights in the research process. This information was provided via the informed consent document that was created as part of the IRB approval process.

Another ethical consideration to navigate through was the anonymity of the participants, particularly sensitive and personal information participants were asked to reveal. Unfortunately, anonymity can never be promised. However I took steps to maintain participants' anonymity and confidentiality to the best of my ability (Esterberg, 2002). I asked the participants to choose a pseudonym. I have not and will not identify the research site and I will keep identifying documents and audio files in a secure area at all times. Access to all data collected was and will be limited to

me. When I shared any information with the peer debriefer, I was intentional about taking back all notes and never revealing identifying information. Although I thought I would record the conversations with the peer debriefer, I felt that for the sake of anonymity, it was best not to record the conversations.

When conducting qualitative inquiry, researchers may develop close relationships with participants (Bloom, 2002; Esterberg, 2002). I developed close relationships with the participants, and I tried to be conscious of my relationship with participants and not exploit them. Bloom cautioned

While we as researchers often put our work at the center of our lives, as we struggle with deadlines and career goals, the research must be secondary to the positive relationships we build in our fieldwork, and our desires to get data should never jeopardize these relationships. We should always be gracious and grateful to those we research. (2002, p.313)

I strived to be a gracious researcher. I respected the narratives they share with me. Further, I learned that my idea to work with my participants to identify themes was not as considerate of their interests and time management. I am very thankful to my participants and I will protect their anonymity and narratives with utmost respect.

Delimitations

The scope of the study was confined to AAPI transfer students at one university. The study focuses primarily on the postsecondary educational experiences of AAPI transfer students and how racialization may influence those

experiences. As with any CRT educational study, the need to critique current procedures and structures were crucial.

Limitations

Even with prolonged engagement and member checking, there were some limitations and challenges. The institutional review board for this institution limited the observations. The interviews were conducted in one semester and thus the researcher could not observe changes over time in the participants. The findings will be limited to AAPI transfer students at a university in one Midwestern state. While the findings may be useful to help understand the participating AAPI transfer students, they should not be intended to portray all AAPI transfer students.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to explore and understand how AAPI transfer students navigate through postsecondary experiences and how racialization may play a role in influencing such circumstances. Phenomenology was employed to explore the understanding of lived postsecondary experiences of AAPI transfer students. This chapter provides an overview of the methodology, research site, participant selection, data collection, data analysis, trustworthiness, delimitations, and limitations of the study.

In Chapter 4, the participants' profiles will be included. Chapter 5 will indicate the study's findings. Chapter 6 includes a discussion of the summary of the findings, connection to current literature and theories, and my personal reflection.

Chapter 4: Participant Profiles

It's like everyone tells a story about themselves inside their own head. Always. All the time. That story makes you what you are. We build ourselves out of that story.

Patrick Rothfuss

In this chapter, I present profiles and the lived experiences of the five Asian American transfer students that participated in the study. The participants selected for this study include a representation of different academic majors and Asian ethnic backgrounds. Some of the participants recently transferred to a four year institution and some participants had transferred several years ago. In order to give context to the students' experiences, it is important to provide a description of participants' lives beyond their academic experiences.

John

In meeting John, his excitement to learn more about himself and other Asian Americans was unparalleled. He labeled himself as an activists and he was very familiar with terms such as 1.5 generation Asian American and references the myth of model minority throughout his interviews. From a young age, he had been very conscious of his appearance and how he was told that he looked different than those around him.

In this study, I used pseudonyms and I thought it would be interesting to ask the participants to choose their names. The pseudonym 'John' is what he uses at restaurants and other public spaces rather than his actual name because he felt it would take too long to educate others on the proper pronunciation. His real name is

not long, but it is a Laotian name. He shared that “It’s gonna take forever to remember it, to spell it.” He learned at very young age from his older brother to use the name John for reservations or any other instances where a name is required. He shared that no one ever asks how to spell or pronounce John. His brother, who is six years older, taught him this ‘trick’ when he was seven years of age. He has continued the practice as an adult.

John was born in the U.S. His family was originally from Laos. He is the youngest of three children, and both of his brothers were born in Laos. He shared that he is a citizen and the rest of his family is not. Many people assumed that his parents were involved in the war but his parents were not soldiers and they did not fight. He was told that his family came to the United States because they felt they could work the same number of hours while earning a higher salary. Additionally, one of his Mother’s friends shared with her that Americans go to college. His mother heard that if she stayed in Laos, her children would never attend college.

Although his parents had high aspirations for all their children to go to college, John is currently the only one pursuing a postsecondary credential. One of his brothers attended a community college. He left the institution without a credential. His other brother is in jail. Both of his brothers were involved with gangs starting in high school.

Directly from high school, he went to a large predominantly white institution. He left the first institution for many reasons. One of the reasons was his parents’ deaths. His parents passed away in a car accident. John revealed that he was in the

car with his parents during the car accident. They were picking him up from winter break his first semester in college.

Another reason for John's departure from the institution was that he felt isolated and lonely. Afterwards, he transferred to a small private college. He left that institution because the costs were too high. Afterwards, he began his coursework at a community college where he felt the most comfortable. The students around him were racially diverse. Their class backgrounds were more similar to his. There were peers who identified with the LGBT community. In his interview, he briefly shared that he identifies as bisexual, however, his family is unaware of his sexual orientation.

He stated that more people need to understand how Asian Americans are the subjects of discrimination as well as their lessened power as compared to their White counterparts. For example, he shared that Laotian and Laotian Americans are never mentioned in any history books other than one sentence connected to the Vietnam War. He studied abroad in Laos and feels very strongly that other Laotian Americans need to spend some time in Laos to begin to understand their collective history.

Currently, he feels overwhelmed being a transfer student. He shared how he is left out of social events. Even though the institution is focused on students having a positive experience, all students tend to stick to their social groups. Some of his future goals included traveling around the world. At times, he felt alone and overwhelmed by all that he has experienced. When I asked if he would consider talking to a counselor or psychologist, he mentioned that he has spoken to three

different professionals. All of whom made him feel worse about himself and they were unable to understand his perspectives as a Lao-American.

Jimmy

Jimmy was the only participant who asked permission to participate. He was unsure if he could participate because this study was focused on Asian Americans. He identifies as Asian American and White. His father, who is White, traveled to the Philippines where he met Jimmy's mother. Both of his parents possess postsecondary education credentials. His father has a baccalaureate and currently works in manufacturing. However, he has a medical condition that makes it difficult for him to work long hours. His mother is a medical technician, and works in a hospital. He is the only participant who is not a first generation college student. In comparison to the other participants, he had the most ideal situation with respect to community college and transfer experiences. He shared very positive experiences and how he always felt people were willing to help.

Jimmy repeatedly told me that he wished he planned more for life after high school. He felt as though he was always playing catch up with those around him. He wanted to attend a private religious institution. However, he did not inquire about the tuition until much later. Once he found out the costs of tuition and living expenses, he realized he could not afford it. At that point, it was too late for him to look into other institutions.

For Jimmy, his race was less salient part of an identity. He identified more with his socioeconomic status and the fact that he is from a rural part of the Midwest. Being from a rural community, his transitional process included living in a larger

college town and living in more dense housing. He shared how the college town environment is very different than his community, at home. He grew up in a small rural community with less than 1,000 people. He went to elementary school, middle school, and high school with the same students. Everyone knew everyone. The rural community life has been an important part of his upbringing.

As he transitioned to his current institution, his cost of living increased and he has struggled with it. He mentioned the costs of food makes it difficult for him to imagine what it is like to live in a more urban environment. His suitemates have made comments regarding the barrenness of his room. He believed the price for a higher education is worth it. He explained his gratitude that community colleges were available and he felt that he received a comparable if not superior education at the community college than at a four year institution.

Sonny

Sonny was friendly throughout the interviews. At times, he was unsure of how to explain his experiences. However, once he felt comfortable, he shared a lot about himself. He wanted to help me with this research project. He asked other transfer students to support my work. I will remember Sonny for his friendly disposition throughout his interviews.

Sonny was originally from the Midwest and he moved to Las Vegas as a child. His parents identified as Laotian and Tai Dam refugees. Tai Dam is an ethnic group of Vietnam, Laos, China, and Thailand. They are known as the people without a country. His dad's ethnicity is Chinese. Sonny and his brothers identified as Chinese, Laotian, and Tai Dam. The reason for his family's relocation stemmed from

Sonny's dad's concern that living in the Midwest would limit Sonny's opportunities. His dad felt that living closer to the west or east coast would provide more opportunities for Sonny and his siblings. Also, his dad felt that living in the Midwest as an Asian American is lonelier. So, when Sonny was in elementary school, his family moved.

Sonny was a high achieving student in high school; he graduated high school in three years. He was admitted to a four year university. His mother wanted him to move back to the Midwest and live with his aunt and attend college. So, he chose to move to back to the Midwest and attend community college because the costs were lower and he knew he could transfer to a four year university. He did not want to attend a community college, but at that point he no longer wanted to live with his parents.

His community college experience was lonely. He did not have friends and he played video games as his social outlet. During that time, he wanted to pursue pharmacy. However the only school with a pharmacy program within the region would have been a small private institution. Due to his lack of funds, he decided to transfer to his current institution. He chose computer science engineering. He did not take any engineering courses until he transferred. Engineering courses were challenging and he realized that he no longer wanted to be an engineer. He changed his academic major to business. At 18, when he was admitted to a 4 year university, he chose not to attend because the institution admitted him was in business and not engineering. Now, he has changed majors and he regretted not attending the university a few years ago.

Sonny found out that his dad had wanted him to go directly to a 4 year institution and his parents had some disagreements regarding his future. He had wanted to graduate college early. He wanted to start working and help his parents and provide a better lifestyle for himself and those around him. This is his fifth year in college and he will need to be in college for another year or two. He felt he has fallen behind. Several of his friends from high school have graduated from college. Being on Facebook reminded him that he has not accomplished that goal yet.

Rachael

Rachael was the sole woman participant in this study. She is the eldest daughter of Vietnamese immigrants. She identifies as a lesbian, and at times, “kinda White”. She said that most of her friends are White and her partner is White. In contrast to her younger sister, most people in her sister’s social circle are Asian American.

Rachael was a high achieving high school student. She was very proud of her academic excellence. She achieved high marks and her parents had great hopes for her to attend a prestigious four year institution. Her parents wanted her to pursue a career in pharmacy. They felt that she was the brighter one between her and her sister. She needed to secure an excellent future to take care of herself, her sister, and her parents.

However, when Rachael began to apply to colleges, she had no idea what the expectations were. She did not know she needed to write a personal statement. She wrote one sentence stating that she wanted to be a pharmacist. She was denied

admission to the one program to which she applied, but she was admitted to the institution for another academic major. However, she quickly realized that she would not be able to afford the tuition. She was not aware nor did she understand the financial aid system. The cost of higher education was not something she considered until she was admitted. She decided to attend community college, to save money and to find out more about different academic programs.

During her community college attendance, she worked approximately 40 hours a week. She worked part time in a retail store and part time as a pharmacy technician. She needed to work 40 hours to pay for tuition and living expenses. Her parents work, but they have been avid gamblers. Her parents' incomes have gone towards support of her sister, who was still in high school, and to their gambling funds.

Her transition to the four year institution was eased by the fact that her partner attends the same school. She found solace in being able to live with her partner, even though her parents have expressed their discomfort with that decision. Further, she has switched her academic major to kinesiology because she felt that kinesiology helps people before they get sick.

Ted

Out of all the participants, Ted was the most candid despite his difficult childhood. He was born on the west coast and his parents were originally from Vietnam. His parents had relatives that lived in the Midwest, so his family moved to the Midwest when he was a toddler. At that point, his family faced severe financial concerns. His parents (who did not speak English very well and lacked formal

education) were raising six children on a very fixed budget. Around this time, his dad began to abuse his mother. He does not have memories of the specific incidents; however, he remembered living with his mother and his siblings in a shelter for women who were trying to remove themselves from domestic violent relationships. Ted shared that after that incident, his dad took control of the home that he would not allow his mom and his siblings to return.

After that, his mom and his siblings moved into a small apartment. Eventually, his mother met a man who would become Ted's step-father. Ted's step-father is White and he considers his step-father to be his *real dad*. They moved into a middle class neighborhood. Both his dad and his mom worked long hours, but they had stable income and were able to purchase a home.

As Ted's older brothers grew up, they became affiliated with gangs. They would have violent interactions with others; gang members would seek out his older brothers in connection to crimes. Although his brothers stopped the gang related activities, they had no desire to pursue a postsecondary education. By the time Ted was in high school, he and his younger brother were considered the last hope for his mom to have a child go to college and graduate.

Unfortunately, Ted's dad became unemployed and their financial situation rapidly changed. Ted's family was no longer able to afford their home. Their home was repossessed by the bank and they were homeless. His dad was able to find work in another state and because they spent all their savings on trying to pay the bank, they had to borrow more money to buy a trailer. Due to his family's financial situation, he began to work in construction to bring in income.

His only choice to pursue higher education was through the community colleges. His high school had a dual enrollment program, which allowed him to earn some college credits as a high school student. He credited his community college experience as helping him realized his strengths.

Summary

All five participants identified as Asian American transfer students. They have experiences that shape how they have navigated through community colleges and transfer experiences. Their family history and lived experiences mold their perspectives in higher education. They have diverse experiences which may have defined limitations as well as challenges that they overcame to be the people that they are now. In the following chapter, Chapter 5, the findings of this study will be identified. In Chapter 6, the discussion surrounding the findings, theoretical framework, and current literature will be included. Additionally, Chapter six will include limitations, practical and research implications of the study, my personal reflection.

CHAPTER 5: FINDINGS

By three methods we may learn wisdom: First, by reflection, which is noblest; Second, by imitation, which is easiest; and third by experience, which is the bitterest.

Confucius

In the previous chapter, the participants' profiles were highlighted. This chapter presents the research findings from this study, which is guided by the following research questions: (a) What are Asian American transfer students' perceptions of their community college experiences; (b) What are Asian American transfer students' perceptions of their transfer experiences; (c) What are Asian American transfer students' perceptions of their post transfer experiences? After a thorough data analysis, five themes emerged: (a) Parents' expectations; (b) Academic majors; (c) Sense of community college; (d) Old and alone; (e) Class matters. The themes were arranged based on individual choices to structural and societal issues. Each theme highlights the different ways Asian American transfer students viewed their educational journey. This study is also guided by Critical Race Theory, the foci of race and racism on systemic structures and individual experiences (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012) and more discussions regarding race will be included in the next chapter.

Theme 1: Parents' Expectations

Earlier research highlighted that family can be an important part of Asian Americans' perceptions of higher education; and family members can place pressure on students to excel academically and fulfill cultural and familial obligations (Maramba, 2008). In this study, Asian American transfer students had their

challenges and moments of navigating family expectations. Oftentimes, students understood their parents' expectations but they felt unsure of meeting their families' aspirations. Additionally, the students shared moments of family pressure which included: (a) Family perceptions of community colleges; (b) Clear expectations, unknown pathways; (c) Post graduation plans.

Family Perceptions of Community Colleges

For many students, regardless of race and ethnicity, their family members' opinions influenced how they act. The participants in this study had positive experiences at the community college, which will be discussed in another section of the results. However, the family members' perceptions of community colleges were unenthusiastic. John described:

He (John's brother) just didn't perform well at all in school. He never attended his classes. So like, umm... I think like the grand dream of things was like my parents pictured him a like a big university too. But then you know they were kinda upset.

John shared that his parents were frustrated that his brother, who attended a community college, did not fulfill the dream that they had for him. Further, John's brother eventually dropped out and his parents felt that community colleges were not institutions that would help their family achieve the goals that they dreamed of achieving when they came to the U.S. John's parents had limited contact with community colleges. Thus John's brother's success (or lack thereof) greatly influenced how John's parents perceived community colleges.

When John decided to reverse transfer from a four year institution to a community college, his parents were understandably upset.

I just wanna go to community college dad... It's like; let's not waste all that money, and let's not doing anything. My dad was like 'no. you're not going back to the community college.' cause my brother performed so poorly... and umm he drop out pretty much. He never went back to school... It just really upset my dad. He was just like 'you're gonna do the same as your brother' ... you're not gonna finish school and you're not gonna finish it ever. So I don't want that to happen to you. So you're gonna stay at the university. It's parent thing. You don't know it, but I'm doing something that you're gonna thank me later.

Even though John expressed to his father that community colleges would save their family's money and that he did not want to stay at a university, his father feared that the community college would hinder John's pathway to a college degree. The discussion for John to continue at a four year institution rather than a community college ended after that comment. Due to John's brother's experiences, his family no longer felt that community colleges would help. Thus, the idea that John would attend a community college was very upsetting for his parents. It was not until John's father and mother passed away that John thought some more about attending a community college. However, John transferred to another university first. His brothers insisted that he take his parents' advice and continue pursuing higher education at a four year institution. It was after this lateral transfer that he reverse transferred to a community college.

Rachael briefly touched on the fact that her parents would only allow her to attend a community college if she did not make it into any other institution.

They (her parents) wanted me to go straight into (a 4 year institution) for pharmacy school right out of high school, but I just lied to them that I applied and didn't make it in (even though she did make it into the institution)... I didn't know for sure if I wanted to go to a pharmacy school, and I didn't want to waste all that time and everything. The first two years at the pharmacy school was going to be the same thing as the first two years at the community college, so I was like, I'm just going to go... and get all my gen eds (general education requirements) and then figure it out from there...

Rachael could not be honest that she felt community college would be a better choice for her. She did not expect them to understand the benefits of attending community colleges. She knew that if she openly told her parents she was admitted to the four year institution, she would have had to attend. The idea that anyone would pick a community college over the four year institution deviated from her parents' expectations. Rachael had understood that her parents perceived community colleges to be a less desirable choice than four year institutions. Although the four year institution would not have been Rachael's choice, she had to navigate her parents' perceptions and choose to attend a community college.

Sonny's experiences were a little bit different. His mother felt comfortable with the decision in attending college because she wanted him back in the Midwest. However, the idea of Sonny staying at the community college for a longer period than expected caused anxiety.

I believe they expected me to eventually get to the university level... Yeah, I don't believe my parents wanted me to stop at a two-year degree. ... Yeah, it was always that (transferring to a four year institution), yeah. It was never said, but they would bring it up a couple of times, but I had already talked to them about it and I told them that I was going to so I think they just assumed that I was going to transfer.

Sonny contradicted himself. He shared that his parents never stated the importance of transferring to a four year institution but they would bring it up to him a few times. His parents may have never uttered the precise words that transferring is the most important, but Sonny received the message that his role and responsibilities were not to simply attend community college and graduate with an associate's degree. That would be inadequate for his parents. A community college education was insufficient and unsatisfactory for his parents. His parents expected him to transfer to a four year institution. Transfer was the only pathway to success and fulfilled his parents' expectations. Community colleges were one stop in the journey to a college degree, but it would not be the last.

In the parents' eyes, community colleges were inferior and insufficient; the true goal would be attending and graduating at a four year institution. The next sub theme related to parents' expectations included the clear expectations but unclear pathways to success.

Clear Expectations, Unknown Pathways

The Asian American transfer student participants knew they needed to achieve academic excellence. Their parents laid out very clear goals, but the parents were unsure of how to accomplish that goal. This sub theme, titled clear expectations and unknown pathways highlights how Asian American transfer students understood their parent's high expectations and were not provided with the tools to achieve them. For example, John explained how he knew he needed to do well in school and know what to do, because his parents were not familiar with higher education.

... they didn't know much about college themselves. Our decisions, they just had to put their trust in...I suppose it's because, 'We (his parents) don't speak English, we don't speak English well, we don't know how this college ... we don't know all this vocabulary, whatever, these processes. Make sure you do it for mum and dad, okay.' That's what their talk was.

His parents identified the goal of pursuing higher education, but they themselves did not know much about college nor the admission process. Language barriers made it more difficult for his parents to seek out information. They needed to trust their children would follow the proper procedures and rules to reach for the next step in their education. Further, his family's situation has forced John to constantly struggle with the pressures of being the savior in his family.

When John's parents were alive, they worked very hard. His parents wanted all three of their children to go to college, graduate, and get a job. Unfortunately, one of his brothers committed a crime and went to prison. Another brother dropped out of

college without any intention of going back. When he thinks about what his parents have gone through, from the Vietnam War, immigration, and their deaths, he puts greater pressure on himself to accomplish their goal of having a child graduate from college.

Another example of how parents had clear goals but were unsure of the pathways would be how Rachael had to explain her timeline and credentials to her parents.

They don't really know anything. They ask me all the time, "You took two years, how many years do you have left?" They don't know anything. My dad, a little bit, but they don't really ... "What's a Bachelor's Degree?" I told them, "I got my Associates Degree in the mail." "What do you get to do with that?" They don't know anything *really* about college. They both didn't go to college. My mom didn't even finish high school because she was pregnant with me and came over to America.

In some ways, she understood her parents' expectations of her doing well in school and graduating. However, her parents' understanding of the American higher education system was vague. They were not aware of the associate's credential and unsure of how it could culminate in a baccalaureate degree. Further, her mom's lack of education meant that her mother supported her but limited in academic advice. One of the more challenging aspects of it is that Rachael tried very hard to please her parents. Even though she was not interested in pharmacy school, she applied. When she was rejected for the second time, her parents told everyone (close

relatives and family friends) that she was not admitted. They were frustrated that she was not admitted and they were sad.

Both Rachael and Ted commented on their parents' lack of education being a hindrance to their own development. Ted spoke of his family members being able to help him when he was a child. However, as he got older, the roles changed.

They (native students) have connections. They have people that they can talk to who know the stuff and they can get it from them.... Either family members ... My family, they weren't in calculus or anything like that. They didn't do any of that stuff. I can't really ask them for help. They really helped a lot when I was a little kid because they knew multiplication stuff, but once it got into the more complicated mathematics, then it was all me—either me or the teacher or my friends.

As a transfer student, he compared his experiences and his knowledge to his native student peers. He felt that native students had more resources. Ted would be a good example of how one inevitably compares life experiences. Ted felt that they knew more academic subjects. Even if they did not, he felt that they had access to more information from their family members. Ted's parents did not have connections to find out which courses were critical. His financial situation made it difficult to seek out tutors. Thus, Ted relied on teachers and friends to help him.

For Sonny, it was not only the course content. He did not compare himself to native students. He compared his lived experiences with those who have parents born and raised in the U.S. He felt that children of people who were more 'American' received more assistance.

I don't know how common it is to find a second generation Asian-American around my age, but I feel like my parents... My parents aren't as American, so they don't know English that well. They can't help me with some things in my life, whereas kids that are second generation have parents that have lived in America and kind of know what's going on... having parents that were born in America, they probably make more money and they can support you better ... since they've gone through that education. They just know more in general.

Sonny's perception is that his parents were unable to help him, not only because they lack a college degree. They were unable to help him because they were not as *American* as others. He felt that other's parents, specifically those who were born and raised in the U.S., knew more than his parents. Sonny pursued all of his education in the U.S. He interpreted his parents as having less awareness of American education (including higher education) because they were not Americans. Even though he identifies as Asian American, his perceptions of his parents' *non-American* identity hindered his educational developments.

In certain ways, his family put more pressure on him because he knew he had to do this by himself. They believed having a college degree is and getting good grades should be the most important things in life. In another part of the interview, he explained that his parents were refugees and they do not know a lot of people with college degrees. Sonny's parents valued education, but their lack of awareness of the process led them to support his academic endeavors with only their words of encouragement. They could not turn to those around them to seek out additional information. They could not act on that support through conversations with advisors

or looking up information on websites. Their words were one of the few ways that they could lay out their expectations.

This idea of clear goals and unclear pathways challenged the myth of the model minority. In the sense that the myth discusses excellence and many times the myth is connected to the parents pushing their children to succeed (Chou, 2008). However, the push towards success without knowledge means that the Asian American transfer students felt the pressure and none of the capital that others presume Asian Americans possess. To further expand on this theory of clear expectations and unclear pathway, the next section will focus on the sense of relief when they graduate, secure jobs, and use their income to help the family.

Post-Graduation Plans

In this study, the participants shared about their past, present, and their future. As it related to parents' expectations, their college admission and performing well academically were part of it. Their post-graduation plans were connected to parents' expectations as well. In many ways, the parents' expectations have played such a role of support and placed pressure on these Asian American transfer students. They envisioned their post-graduation plans as being able to fulfill their parents' goals and reach their aspirations.

For example, Sonny shared this very sentiment of pleasing everyone around him and how coming from an immigrant family and lower class would influence how his parents viewed his next steps.

Since they (his parents) just moved to the United States, they don't have as much money as someone in the middle class... (They want) Their children to study really hard and get the top grades, whether it is grade school, middle school, high school, or college. I feel like for the lower class, there's a time between, "We really need you to be successful and we want to push you to a really good profession." Then, at the same time it's like, "I have to do really well for my family, and they really need that money," and you'd be the first to graduate in your family, type of thing.

Sonny described how excellence was expected, not simply because his parents were demanding it from him. They wanted him to succeed to be able to have a successful career and to bring some of the income to contribute to the family's budget. The practical component of parents' expectations has been for parents to have access to their children's stability.

Ted highlighted how much he wanted to graduate from college. He wanted to get to the finish line. By getting to the finish, he could help his family and provide a more comfortable lifestyle for them.

(I want to) Be done. Be done, help my family, help my mom and dad, let them stop working and let me do it... This is pressure on myself, but it's a very noble thing to do. I kind of want them to get out of trailer (his parents' home). My mom has ... They found that she has bronchitis because of the dust she's been breathing in that trailer.

Ted wanted to graduate not only for himself. He wanted to start a career and provide resources to help alleviate his parents' financial worries. He shared how

much he would like to take his mom and dad away from the trailer homes. His mother's health has deteriorated; living in the trailer homes has made it harder for her to get better. Many college students' goals include graduation. However, Ted and the other participants put greater pressures on themselves due to parental expectation. All the participants believed that education would be the only way to meet their parents' expectations. This idea, that education and only higher education, has placed such great pressure on the students to succeed. Parents' perceptions included community colleges' limited mission would not be able to help their family enter middle class. Their parental expectations are clear, but they themselves may not have the knowledge to navigate postsecondary education. For the participants, the post-graduation plans would alleviate a lot of the pressure. In the next section, there will be discussion on academic majors.

Theme 2: Academic Majors

There has been an assumption that Asian Americans excel in STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) fields. They were more likely to pursue a career in STEM fields (Cole, 2009; Pyke & Dang, 2003). In this study, the topic of academic majors was a significant to the students' experiences. Three topics were identified: (a) Good and bad majors; (b) Not starting over; (c) Work experience. The first topic (good and bad majors) dealt with how students were socialized to identify academic majors into good and bad. The second topic, not starting over, identified how students felt as transfer students at new institutions and limiting their search for academic majors related to courses they took at the community college and not wanting to start a new academic discipline and taking more courses. The

third topic was how their work experience connected to their academic major selection. In the interviews, one participant discussed work experience and the impact on academic major selection. Although it was not identified by other participants, her experience was pertinent to this discussion about academic majors.

Good and Bad Majors

In the previous section about parental expectations, the amount of parental influence towards the Asian American transfer students' perceptions was identified. Specifically, in this section, the focus will be parents' labeling of good and bad academic majors. Further, the parent's identifying academic majors has influenced how students tag academic disciplines. The participants identified *good* academic majors and *bad* academic majors. For example, Rachael was highly encouraged to pursue pharmacy. Her parents began making comments to her from a young age about the benefits of a career in pharmacy.

They (her parents) just thought it was the easiest, make-a-lot-of-money job ever. They don't know anything about it. They don't know what I do or anything about the job, but they make a lot of money. The schooling is less than becoming a doctor. Doctors are eight to 12 years. Pharmacist is six years, you're done. They thought it was going to be easy, clean-cut. She (her mom) was like, "Pharmacy would be the best thing." They drilled it into my head.

Her parents thought that pharmacy would be a good discipline and academic major because it paid well and it required less schooling than becoming a doctor.

This would be a career with high incomes but less schooling (and pressure) of being a doctor. Her parents may not know what requirements were included to become a pharmacist. They had a sense of the amount of time for schooling, but not about the content of the coursework. They did not know what the drawbacks of becoming a pharmacist would involve. They had limited knowledge about the academic discipline and career. At times, Rachael's interests may not have included pharmacy, but she would not have known what her interests were. Her parents never spoke to her about her options. She was not exposed to different academic interests. She was given one choice, pharmacy. The only good choice, decided by her parents, would be pharmacy.

For Rachael, one of the most important things in her life would be to please her parents. She shared, "That was my only goal (to pursue a degree in pharmacy) because I wanted to make my parents happy. That was the only thing. I just wanted to make my parents happy, so I took all the science classes." She knew that pharmacy was a *good* academic major because it would please her parents. She may or may not have been interested, but she had to uncover the necessary requirements. Her notion of what academic major to pursue was connected to her understanding that pharmacy would be a good major based on her parents' limited knowledge. Any other major would be perceived as a bad academic major.

Another example, of Rachael's perceptions of good and bad academic majors, included her description of her sister's interests.

My sister, she wants to be a hair stylist, they're (their parents) "No, you shouldn't to do that. It doesn't make enough money and you're not going to like it,"

which is true. She doesn't like anything. She's changed her major five times this semester already.

Rachael highlighted that her parents would disapprove of her sister's interest in hairstyling. She agreed with her parents and she felt that her sister should commit to an academic major and not dream of becoming a hairstylist. She felt the pressure from her parents to pursue pharmacy and she was not fond of the discipline. She felt that her sister needed to grow up and realized what careers were viable (good) and not fantasize about the *bad* careers.

From a young age, she excelled in school. However, she was not allowed to explore or consider what her interests were. Rather, her parents (and she willingly agreed) that pharmacy would be the only career that would suit her. While Rachael's sister found something she was interested in pursuing, Rachael labeled it as a bad career move. She agreed with her family that money should play a part in academic major choice. She expressed frustration that her sister would explore different academic majors and career paths.

Similarly, Ted had expressed interest in art. However, when I asked him why he did not pursue art or graphic designs as an academic discipline or career option, he shared, "Money... art and engineering, they're the same. Engineers (are) creative too that they make new ideas and stuff like that..." Ted was interested in art, but he chose engineering. He labeled art and engineering as being very similar. Ted's perceived the only difference between the two academic majors is the amount of money one would make with each credential. Both required creativity. However, he preferred engineering over art due to financial concerns. Financial gain opportunities

were involved in the labeling of a good or bad academic major. Careers which compensated more were considered good. Careers with less compensation were labeled as bad.

Part of the process in labeling of a good or bad major was the perception, either theirs or their family members, in the economic viability of each discipline. John shared how he wanted to pursue a career in journalism, specifically foreign correspondence. He shared with me his concerns.

My professors were like well, John, you're not going to get there right away so you're going to work from the bottom up. Like the dirt bottom and then traditional journalists are not supposed to be making ... a good salary.

They're supposed to be starving but they're willing to get the truth out and it's just like it really scares me with the student loans, it's just so overwhelming.

John wanted to pursue a career in foreign correspondence. However, his faculty members at the 4-year institution explained to him that the income, particularly in the early part of the career, would be very low. His commitment to the field of journalism should be more important than salary. However, that was not John's reality. He has student loans. His parents passed away. His brothers were barely able to take care of themselves. He could not pursue a job with limited financial gain. The faculty member sharing the necessary information about the salary levels of entry level journalist made him realize he could not simply pursue journalism. He must consider his financial situation and how he will pay off his student loans.

Due to John's financial situation, he chose to have two academic majors; he chose business as his second academic major. He explained his logic for choosing a second major and why he chose business.

I had to double-major. I had to find business. If journalism doesn't work out... (then) I have something to fall upon. I have to be here two more years... I want to make money. I want to do what I want, but I have to stay here and take all these classes. I'm like, "Man, quit wasting my time... just tell me what I need to do so I can leave." I don't want to create any more debt; I don't want any more loans, (and) I just want to get it done.

He chose business as his second academic major because he wanted a major that would secure a more stable and wealthier outcome if journalism does not work out. He labeled business as a good major. He learned that business major may provide a more stable income. He loved journalism, but the future became unforeseeable and unclear. His parents instilled in him the importance of planning a clear path to economic stability. To love and to be interested in a field does not label it a good academic major. His interests in journalism combined with his financial and family situation forced him to pick up a second major. The consequences of choosing a second major, particularly as a transfer student, required more coursework and more student loans. In this setting, John felt tired, frustrated, and forced into a corner.

Not Starting Over

The act of transferring from community college to a baccalaureate granting institution should be a sign of success (Hagedorn & Lester, 2006). However, several of the students highlighted how they wanted to progress in their education. They limited their choice in academic majors based on the courses they had taken at the community college. In their words, they did not want to consider other academic majors because they did not want to 'start all over again'.

For example, Rachael took many sciences courses, due to her original goal of pursuing a career in pharmacy. However, when she realized that she was no longer interested in pharmacy, she felt she had fewer choices because of her desire to graduate without taking additional time to take more courses.

I'll have to go into a health field, because I have all these science classes and I cannot do anything else. I mean, I like animals, but I'd have to go all the way through like animal ecology and like I haven't had all of these classes. I'm like, "I don't want to start over." That's why I'm in kinesiology, like the pre-health profession field, so we'll see what I choose from there.

Rachael expressed interest in veterinary studies. However, she did not want to go through all the prerequisite courses. She fulfilled the requirements for a pharmacy credential. She transferred as a junior standing student. She had taken many science courses connected to pre-health profession. She felt she should not shift her focus. Therefore, she limited her interests to the pre-health fields despite the fact that she may have been fascinated by other academic disciplines.

Additionally, time constraints also limited academic major choices. In the previous section, parents' expectations, the idea of graduating and working became the largest goal. Not surprisingly, one of the participant's, Sonny, explained how he would not pursue pharmacy because it would take too many years.

... it was actually harder to get into the pharmacy school and this was said by my (community college) advisors and advisors at another college. My dreams were kind of crushed because they said that I would have to continue on to get a biology or chemistry degree so that would take another two years after community college. I (would then) have a bachelor's ... but my ultimate goal was to be a pharmacist, which would be another I believe it was a four-year program after your pre-pharmacy (degree). It was supposed to be a six-year degree ... if you get into the college right away, but it would've turned into an eight-year degree ... I actually didn't want to be in school that long or plan to be in school that long so that's why I wanted to change my major.

Sonny had wanted to pursue a degree in pharmacy. During his time at the community college, he could not take certain courses that fulfilled the pre-pharmacy academic major requirement. The fastest way would be for him to major in biology or chemistry and try to fulfill the pre-pharmacy requirements at the four year institution. Then he would apply for admissions to get into the pharmacy program. All of this went beyond his original timeline of how long he planned to be in school. Similar to Rachael, his coursework at the community colleges left him with fewer options to pursue to his goals.

Community colleges have been the entrance point for many students. However, being at a community college, some students may feel they have fewer options for coursework or academic majors. Sonny was unaware of which institutions would have his academic discipline and some of his previous coursework would not transfer to fulfill graduation requirements in his new academic major. In comparison, Rachael was focused in her goal of pharmacy that any other academic interest was pushed aside. When the time came and she needed to consider another academic major, she was limited because she wanted to graduate soon. Being at the community college, Rachael and Sonny felt they spent extra time compare to other students. The next section focuses on Rachael and how through her work experience she realized that pharmacy was not the right fit for her.

Work Experience

Rachael's work experience provided another opportunity for her to reflect on her academic interests. Her work experience as a pharmacy technician helped her identify what careers would interest her.

I was working part-time at (a retail store) and part-time at (a pharmacy). I was doing both jobs... I took a semester off and I did part-time at (a retail store) and part-time at a (pharmacy). I don't think I could do full-time at either job... I can't do the same thing over and over... they (her colleagues) look so miserable. They hate it there. I'm like, "I don't want to be like that." The more I stand there, "Oh, my God, I can't do this."

Her work experience helped her realize that she could not work in retail or a pharmacy the rest of her life. She learned how repetitive her workload would be if she became a pharmacist. Her part time job helped her realize that a good major was one that she could see herself pursuing daily. She no longer saw pharmacy as a good academic major because it would help her make a lot of money. There were moments where she expressed guilt in not pursuing pharmacy, but overall, she viewed it as a positive outcome that she has the opportunity to learn through her work experience that a career in pharmacy would not suit her.

Currently, Rachael has been interning at a physical therapy center. She has not decided if she likes her work. However, her work experience has helped her identify what kinds of careers she would like to have. Two other participants mentioned being older and being employed. At times, it can feel like a negative being an older adult transfer student. However, having more work and life experience has helped Rachael in ways that she has yet to realize.

Theme 3: A Sense of Community (College)

The third theme, a sense of community, would highlight how the participants' perceived the community college as a community. Some of the topics for this theme include: (a) quality of instruction, (b) special connections, and (c) diversity. The academic experiences highlighted how students felt they had a supportive learning environment. The special connections referred to the personal connections they had with faculty members or peers at the institution. Lastly, the diversity topic touched on how students felt that community college students were more racially diverse and had more diverse experiences.

Quality of Instruction

The participants remarked on the high quality of instruction they received at the community colleges. Sonny understood that others may think community colleges are inferior, but that would be inaccurate. He explained, "... my community college experience... some people said the classes are easier... but I see that education as almost equivalent or its pretty much the same stuff that you're learning, so that shouldn't be the reason to look down on it." Based on Sonny's perspectives, his education at the community college was centered on the same content. His peers have made some comments about how their quality of learning at the community colleges is better than at four year institutions. He wanted to clarify that his education was comparable.

Jimmy highlighted how he learned more in smaller classes than the large lectures.

With the smaller classes (at community colleges) you've got the benefit of more personal attention which kind of bothers me right now (at the four year institution) with the lectures and all. You never really get to meet your professor and if you do it's to ask either a couple questions or to get information about where you would actually go to get help and that usually either comes from a supplemental class by one of the TAs or outside.

Jimmy preferred the intimate learning experience at the community college. In comparison to the larger lecture halls, he prefers the community college's smaller classes. He feels he must connect with a teaching assistant or sign up for tutoring to learn. Although he wanted to transfer, he felt his learning experiences at the 4-year

institution were inferior to his community college experiences. Particularly for transfer students in the first semester, they are transitioning to in several ways. The shift from small classrooms to a large lecture can be overwhelming. The perception that professors should not be approached would make the transition that much more challenging. Jimmy felt that he has not been given as clear of instructions at the 4-year institution and he felt he is expected to learn more independently.

Additionally, Jimmy articulated that in the large lecture halls, the instruction does not foster conversation.

...the audience is half a stadium and you'd see hundreds or thousands of people with laptops just taking notes and occasionally he'd ask questions and you'd just see maybe five people get to stand up and if you're lost, what do you do? Who are you going to ask? Nobody wants to be the one person that stands up and says "What?" Because then everyone is judging you.

Several of Jimmy's courses are held in a large lecture hall. He noticed a pattern in which most of his peers are on their laptops taking notes. He rarely saw the instructor interact with the students. He observed that no one felt comfortable asking questions. He learned the unwritten rules of never asking questions because you will be deemed unintelligent. He learned that students receive limited interaction; they rarely interacted with each other.

In comparison, in a smaller community college course where students have opportunities to interact with one another, Jimmy preferred learning with others. Obviously, the participants' impressions of quality of instruction seemed overly

simplified. However, Jimmy spoke very candidly about his disappointment in the larger institution's teaching model.

Like Jimmy, Rachael felt the same about the instruction comparison between community colleges and four year institutions.

The biggest difference, I think the classes and the university, the lectures are 300-plus students. At community college, I just feel like it's high school all over again... it's just 30 students in each class and exactly the same thing...The university has more clubs, more stuff to do, and more stuff to be involved in. You don't really know your professors really. You know your TAs more. At the community college, you know your teachers and everything.

Rachael felt at the large lectures did not allow her to get to know her faculty members. She acknowledged the social gains by coming to a four year institution, but she lost the instruction that she was exposed to since she was in high school. She may have perceived the community college courses as being very similar to high school, but she knew her instructors. She connected with them. Instruction at the community college (including course sizes and personalized attention) provided the participants' a high quality learning environment. Students were able to build special connections with peers and faculty members.

Special Connections

John had started his postsecondary education at a large four year institution. He did not like it. He described his community college experience as much more stimulating.

It was reviving because I was able, like I said when I was 18 years old, I was able to just sit there, take classes, and think. I'm like ok. I don't like this. And being in like a room with 22 students and just 15 or 18 student's compare to (a four year university) which is like 200, you know. It's like, that's big.

For John, the connection to the instruction and the classroom community changed. He went from a large lecture hall to being in a classroom with around twenty students. He preferred the intimacy of the smaller classroom size. The size and also the quality of instruction helped him want to learn again. For the participants, the quality of instruction was one of the key elements of appreciating their community college experience and understanding how they benefitted from those special connections.

Ted valued special connections with peers and faculty members. Ted felt that his identity as an engineering student was highly valued at the community college. Being an engineering student meant he and other engineering students formed a community.

I felt really happy that I'm the engineering student and there were only five or six people, maybe seven—seven people, and we're like the center, we're like the smartest kids in this school, we're engineers. I felt really, really good about that. Now it's like, "Oh we're all engineers," and "I'm an engineer, too," that's nothing that special. I don't know.

His identity as an engineering student meant that he connected with the few engineering students. Rather than being in a sea of engineering students, there were about seven students. They took classes together and they felt intelligent.

People recognized them as unique. They were the superstars of the community college. However, his identity and his community of engineering students changed after he transferred. Many students were engineering majors. Many of the engineering students he has encountered are very bright. When Ted identified with another engineering student, the other student did not feel a connection with Ted. In comparison to his community college experience, Ted felt he did not belong to the engineering group of students. There were so many engineering students that the identity and community no longer existed. Ted lost that special connection to his learning and to the institution.

Further, Ted explained his relationships with the faculty members and the engineering peers at the community college.

The teacher and we (other engineering students) basically knew each other, became friends and helped each other out. Talked to each other if someone needed help we help him and if we needed help or if we all needed help we could just ask teacher. They were easily accessible. They are not usually busy, we got their help and it was a lot. The communication was there, we knew when the teacher was there. I know all office hours and everything like that to help. One of my teachers, he is one of a math guy. He was very helpful. He had the majority of my classes anyway. He taught most of my classes. It was easy to basically transition from one subject to another instead of having to go to a different teacher and wait for their time.

Ted's engineering colleagues, at the community college, helped one another.

There was camaraderie and a shared experience which created a bond of support

for one another to get through challenging coursework. Additionally, the faculty member knew the students' names and how all of them wanted to pursue a degree in engineering. Ted and his peers had consistent support from the faculty members at this community college. They did not need to adjust to new teaching styles and they felt comfortable seeking help. They had a relationship with this faculty member and probably others on campus as well. They knew about the resources and they knew they could turn to the faculty members for support. They felt special and they received more resources and assistance from faculty members. The special connections, with faculty members and peers, made the community college experience fuller than the four year institutions for these transfer students.

Diversity

The diversity at the community colleges included racial diversity as well as diverse thoughts and lived experiences. Rachael and other participants explained that there was more racial diversity at the community colleges. She shared, "The (community college) campus is right near downtown. It's really diverse everywhere. Each class you went to was half minorities (students of color)." She acknowledged that the diversity may have been due to the diversity of the surrounding environment.

In comparison, John who was more detailed in his explanation of how his community college was diverse.

... the fact that the city (where the community college campus is located) is diverse in general. You see each other, but it's (diversity) just normal. When you're at (his current four year institution), it's not normal. Also, it's more

common in the city (where the community college is located) area. I still feel that minorities compared to, I guess White Americans, the education is still there (hand raised higher) especially with Black-Americans, Latino-Americans, Asian-Americans (hand dropped lower), still there. I think it's kind of natural for a lot of minority students to go to local community college because, they probably can afford it or their parents can't (afford the four year institution's tuition).

For John, diversity did not only include seeing racially diverse people together. The area where the community college was located was more racially diverse. Rachael and other participants concurred. Delving deeper, John felt that diversity was the idea that students of color not only existed on campus, but the concept is normal. His understanding of diversity was that students of color belonged on a community college campus. John compared four year institutions with community colleges. At the four year institution, a student of colors' presence was not as normal.

In his opinion, students of color prefer community colleges over four year has to do with feeling more comfortable, life experiences, and ability to pay for the tuition. Additionally, he explained his definition of diversity at the community college.

I also like (the community college) because there's diverse students in a similar situation like I was. Like my mom and dad divorce. I'm on my own. I moved out when I was 16. I had two children. My family broke up. There was like kinda like similarity when you go to university or forced into a university and getting all that paid for, you don't have the same understanding as a

community college student. We're like yea, life's pretty messed up. I think a lot of people related to me financially or lifestyle... Like ummm I'm at community college just for the same reasons you are. That's probably one of my best memories of (the community college).

John's definition of diversity included class and life experiences. He described the distinct life experiences he and his peers know, such as having children or coming from a family that separated. In comparison, he identified the native students of four year institutions of being more similar to one another. Therefore any differences blend in at the community college and stand out that much more at the four year institution. In this quote, John touched on finances. For many college students, the cost has been one of the main reasons why they chose to start their postsecondary educational experiences at a community college.

Theme 4: Old and Alone

The theme of old and alone explained the emotions of the Asian American transfer students who transferred and feel out of place; they feel old and alone. Particularly, in comparison to their community college experience, a transfer student can feel out of place. These participants highlighted the emotions and experiences that occur after they transferred.

I'm So Old

For Ted, he successfully transferred to a 4-year institution. He decided to live in the residence hall. However, he quickly realized how different he was from other students.

I don't think there's anyone that's a transfer (student) like me. I always feel like, (others say) "Transfer student. What year are you?" "What do you mean? I guess I would be a first-year of Iowa State, two years in a community college." "You're old man." "Okay, thanks. It's cool." I'm old!

Living in a residence hall, other students discovered that Ted was a transfer student and they called him old. In reality, he was only two years older. He is a traditional age college student. However, the two years made him feel much older. He was the same age as other third year students, but his living situation and his social group included first year native students. The feeling never goes away because this interaction happened frequently. He had to explain his educational journey to everyone, because his peers did not know what the phrase transfer student represented. Due to the lack of awareness, he suffered the consequences of feeling old.

Rachael identified the same sentiments, but in a classroom setting. Even though she spoke about being an upper classmen but she must fulfill the first year student requirements.

I still have the whole freshman classes... you have to graduate with something like library (course requirement), like the freshman stuff and that whole pre-requisites versus other things too. I'm still taking ... I guess there's something like two classes that freshmen usually take, because I'm in a whole class of freshmen. It's so annoying. They're talking about stuff and I'm like "Oh, my gosh." I don't know anything, going out and party and stuff and whatever. I'm doing well. (shrug)

She has taken the library resource course that is an institutional requirement and many first year students fulfill it in their first semester. When she has a course with mostly first year students, she has very little interest in socializing with them. She perceived them as mostly discussing their social plans and being very different than her. Rachael transferred to graduate and start a career. Although the age difference may not be great, her focus has shifted. Rachael has moved on but her peers are at an earlier stage of development.

Additionally, John discussed how he wanted to move on with his life, and not be “the older student” amongst the traditional age students.

I just want to finish school and ... I feel old ... light years away. I just turned 23 last week and compared to 18 year old freshman I feel super old compared to them. I don't want to be, I know there are people who have been here since (they graduated from high school) and they graduated when they were 26 but dude, I don't want to be that guy. I really don't. I've gotten into some bad stuff but I have seen the college life for most of what it's worth. I'm really technically ready to move on.

John, who is 23 and will likely graduate college when he is 24 or 25, is worried that he will not graduate until he is 26 or even older. He shared how he has been in college since he was 18. He went to two institutions before he reverse transferred to a community college and then he vertically transferred to his current institution. He has had multiple college experiences and some of them were not positive. Not surprisingly, he no longer wanted to be in college. By the time he finishes, he would have been in college for seven or more years. Compared to a

native student who is a first year student, his perspectives and life experiences are very different. He has not expressed any of these feelings to his peers. He knows that he cannot, because he understands that they would not know how to respond. Not surprisingly, these experiences would lead to a sense of being alone.

I'm So Lonely

John had explained how he felt old, and he also identified a sense of loneliness. He wanted to make friends and he had expected to have a more positive experience at his current four year institution.

Lonely. But it's not a feeling I haven't felt before. You know, I mean like, loneliness isn't a thing that anybody wants to be alone. But, it happens. You can't make everyone here your friend... So, I'm just like, whatever. I was hoping that by being a leader of Asian American student organization, I would be able to like, bring that activism here. But ugh, it's, after the first meeting, it was a great turn out. But like, it's still not where it needs. And, I'm just sorta like, why am I wasting my neck for these people who don't give a crap about anything.

John thought that he would make friends. He thought that being part of an Asian American student organization, he would bring activism to the four year institution as well as have a community around him. However, that was not the case. Rather, he learned that he was the only person interested in activism. His peers were not supportive of him, and he identified the fact that he was the *new transfer* as the reason they may have been less enthusiastic about helping the student

organization. He thought being part of a student organization would provide a community, but that was not the case. He felt lonely. He wondered why he continued to put time and energy into this student group and trying to befriend his peers.

Ted mentioned his academic experiences and how he has lost his special connection to peers and faculty members and therefore he has lost part of his identity.

I'm not smart like them (native students) anymore. They have people ... I went in there ... I didn't know I could use the notes for the quizzes, so I've been doing bad on them until that I learned how to print out the notes, everything like that. But I think it might be a little too late to get a good grade on it, though... I feel like I'm the bottom of the barrel.

In comparison to his community college experiences, being at the four year institution was hard for Ted. He did not know all the rules. He did not know he could bring notes into class for the quiz. He has felt lonely through the academic experiences. He compared himself to native students. He expressed how native students have more resources, more people who may know how to be a college student. Native students may have more connections. This may or may not be true. However, he went from being one of the best and brightest to feeling like he was inferior to everyone around him. He recognized that he no longer has resources like he had at the community college. He has not made those connections. He realized that some people have it easier than him, not due to effort. In the next theme, class matters, the larger issue of socioeconomic status will be explored and that theme explains and connects to the previous themes.

Theme 5: Class Matters

The theme of class matters highlights the ways in which socioeconomic statuses impacted the participants' postsecondary educational experiences. In this study, I allowed the students to define their class and to define what class included. At times, their definitions of class were connected to what they were seeing around them. The social construction of socioeconomic statuses was occurring throughout the interviews. In connecting to the previous themes of parents' expectations, academic majors, their sense of belonging at the community college, and their feelings of isolation at four year institutions the participants highlighted how their socioeconomic statuses affect their postsecondary experiences.

Class and Family Background

Students explained their family backgrounds which provided insight into their decision making and their perspectives on higher education. Family members' occupations served as a reminder of career options are afforded to those with a college degree. For example, Sonny's parents work in a casino. They did not go to college. His mother has been a card dealer and his dad has been working as an assistant in a restaurant.

...there are so many ways to make money in Las Vegas. If you were a server at a nice restaurant, your tips will be off the charts. You could probably live off that, or a dealer, because they are always wanting young people... People from Vegas always joke about it. It is an open option. Dealers and bartenders make lots of money. It's like, don't worry you guys. If I don't succeed in

college, I just go to dealers school or bartending school (sarcastically and laughter). I decided that college outweighed those options, and I decided to go to college.

Sonny joked that he could be a dealer or a bartender because he knew several family members and friends of the family who worked in the service industry in the casinos. His exposure to lower skilled industries made him realize that he did not want those jobs. His family members' job prospects helped him to realize the importance of going to college. People could easily become a bartender. Others could learn to be a card dealer. To attend college and to graduate meant employment opportunities in which one's work could not be easily replaced. Sonny knew that he wanted to graduate from college. He would have gained skills. He would not lose his job as he got older; he could not be replaced by younger unskilled workers. Education can lead to skills and opportunities beyond the walls of a casino.

Additionally, Jimmy was an example of how much class came into play. Despite the fact that his dad has a college degree, he and his family lived modestly. For him, the costs of higher education dictated where he would attend school.

I didn't want to go anywhere that cost an arm and a leg to get an education, especially for general things like math and science (courses) I could probably get just as well at community college. Calculus...math doesn't really change, so...Food, too, because us living at the town we do (small rural community), it costs nothing compared to when I'm buying things here (current college town), and I'm like "Five dollars for how much ice cream?" I can't find myself

spending or buying things I used to, just because I don't want to pay the extra.

Jimmy recognized that the cost of higher education would be very high. He knew that a community college education was comparable. Additionally, he knew he grew up in a community with lower cost of living. He understood that cost of living would play a role in his choice of schooling. His consciousness of his class fostered a sense of caution in to choosing what college he would attend.

Class, Costs, & Emotions

For the participants, socioeconomic status and the costs of higher education were themes they brought up throughout the study. To add to it, the consequences of their class combined with the costs of education had consequences for students. For Rachael, one of the consequences included her sense of guilt and regret.

I think I would go back and look into more scholarships, because then I wouldn't have to work so hard to pay for my college and pay for all my expenses... I didn't know what college was. I didn't do any tours of school. I didn't go to campus touring or I didn't go to school visits or anything, so I should have maybe done that... I think I should have got to know the teachers better so I'd get more recommendations type thing, so I could apply for scholarships. I think I applied for one scholarship.

Even though Rachael went to community college and successfully transferred, she has carried a sense of regret about the lack of scholarships she received. Her parents did not go to college and she did not know she qualified for

scholarships. Her parents had limited knowledge of higher education and the resources available to them. Her parents did not financially support her. She has to work to pay for tuition and living expenses. She holds onto the idea that she could have done more. In reality, this has been one of the overriding trends in Rachael's narratives. She felt she could have done more when she did not know she could have done more. Her class dictated the lack of resources (financial and academic) that she would have to overcome.

For John, his feelings have less to do with regret but more to do with envy and feeling overwhelmed. His feelings have the ability to hinder his progress.

I was performing (academically) pretty poorly actually. I was not going to my classes and had all of this stuff. I'm still struggling right now. I have so many bills to pay... I work at a job that pays \$9.50 (an hour), but I only work 40 hours a month, if I even have the time to work that much. I'm like, "Man this is so hard, especially when you don't have parents to help you out and shit." I get so depressed. I just feel like killing myself for real. I'm like, "Why does this likely matter?" No one gives a shit." I just feel so alone because no-one else ... all of my friends are pretty well off, like their parents ... and they pay for their rent and they can just go to school. I'm like, "Man, I wish I had that life, my God." I feel so alone...

At this point in the interview, I stopped the interview. I encouraged John to seek out counseling services. I verified with him whether or not he wanted to include this part of his interview in the research. John wanted to include this part because he said that this was part of his troy. He shared with me that he has attended the

counseling services at his institution and he expressed concern about their lack of cultural sensitivity towards his issues.

John has identified the core of concerns about his class background and the costs of higher education. He has struggled paying for his living expenses. He expressed frustration and a sense of loneliness towards having to shoulder the burden while observing those around him who do not. He has friends who never have to think about these issues. His brothers never finished school and cannot provide with him additional support, financial and/or emotional. He has been frustrated with himself, when he does not know who to reach out to seek help.

John wanted to hurt himself; he wanted to commit suicide. College students should focus on learning and preparing for the next steps in their lives. John has not. He has competing problems in his life, emotional and fiscal. His class background has made being a college student that much more challenging. It's overwhelming for him. The intersection of class and costs of education steered John and Rachael to have negative feelings about themselves. Understandably, higher education has costs. The questions regarding support for students to direct them towards graduation and happiness need to be explored.

Class and Graduation

For the participants in this study, graduation represented a pathway and an ending to their struggles. Graduation and a secure job represented freedom from worrying about their lives and those around them. Rachael shared how she wanted to finish school and graduate.

I really wanted to graduate early. I just wanted it to be done...I just wanted to be done and start my life, I guess, start my whole (life) ... Going to my job, having money, I want my own place, I want to afford everything I can. Right now, I can afford stuff if I want to, but not happily I guess...Yes, it's always financial. It's just always in the way. It's all my fault because I didn't apply for scholarships, I didn't do all that.

As highlighted in the above section, Rachael has a sense of regret and guilt about scholarships. In her opinion, her life has not started because she cannot afford everything. Her socioeconomic status has made her want to graduate that much more. She expressed her desire to work at a steady job and having a home. Being low income has hindered her from starting her life. In a way, graduating would include a way to be in a higher class and it would start a life being able to start paying off student loans rather than taking more.

Similarly, Ted shared his goal is to graduate and the satisfaction in being able to reach his goal.

Once I get there it will all be good. I will be relaxed and very happy, I'm happy... When I have enough money in my bank account to be satisfied (chuckles) be able to meet my goals, be comfortable where I work and have money come in and not coming out as frequently. That concept is very easy to remember of course the money you put in more come out of it come to you that coming out of it is you're making profit, you're making money.

Ted has been imagining what life would be like when he graduates. He envisioned his life being settled and having the financial means to support himself

and those around him. He wants to make money so he can move his family away from the trailer homes and provide a stable environment for his parents. He would like to provide a lifestyle he and his family had before his dad became unemployed.

Being from a lower class, all the participants felt an extra push to succeed. In higher education, being in college can be considered a point of pride. To transfer to a four year institution from community college is success. However, for these participants, success was graduating. Being in college, the costs have been high. The fiscal cost of higher education has been increasing. For some participants, the financial component created emotional tensions, such as disappointment in their process or frustration with the lack of understanding by peers. Being from a lower class affected these students' perceptions of their journeys through higher education.

Summary

In chapter 5, the five themes identified included parents' expectations, academic majors, sense of community, feeling old and alone, and socioeconomic class. The first two themes dealt mostly with the individual choices and tensions they face. The second two themes explained the process in which they navigated through community colleges and the four year institutions. The last theme, class, centered on systemic issues that the first four themes have interwoven. Similarly, race and the social construction of the Asian American identity lingered throughout this study. In Chapter 6, the discussion surrounding the findings, theoretical framework, and current literature will be included. Additionally, chapter six will include limitations, practical and research implications of the study, my personal reflection.

CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS, & REFLECTION

Real knowledge is to know the extent of one's ignorance.

Confucius

The findings of this study were presented in the previous chapter. In this chapter, the findings in relation to Critical Race Theory, intersectionality, and existing literature is examined. Additionally, a summary of the study focusing on the three research questions will be provided as well as the limitations and strengths of the study. Implications for practice, centering on community colleges and the receiving institution, will be included. Lastly, my recommendations for future research and personal reflection on the research process end the chapter.

Findings In Relation to Theories

The findings in chapter 5 presented several themes that connect and challenge Critical Race Theory and furthers the importance of intersectionality of students' identities. Both CRT and intersectionality provided direction to understand students' experiences.

Critical Race Theory

The main theoretical framework used to analyze the data was Critical Race Theory (CRT). As explained in Chapter 2, CRT was utilized to understand education and it has been a framework that challenges how race and racism impacts educational structures and practices (Yosso, 2005). According to Matsuda and colleagues (1993) there are six tenets to CRT:

1. Critical race theory recognizes that racism is endemic to American life.
2. Critical race theory expresses skepticism toward dominant legal claims of neutrality, objectivity, colorblindness and meritocracy.
3. Critical race theory challenges ahistoricism and insists on a contextual and/or historical analysis of the law ... Critical race theorists ... adopt a stance that presumes that racism has contributed to all contemporary manifestations of group advantage and disadvantage.
4. Critical race theory insists on recognition of the experiential knowledge of people of color and our communities of origin in analyzing law and society.
5. Critical race theory is interdisciplinary.
6. Critical race theory works toward the end of eliminating racial oppression as part of the broader goal of ending all forms of oppression (p.6).

For the purpose of this study, the findings relate specifically to tenets two, three, and four. Tenets one and six were incorporated indirectly. Tenet one, racism is endemic in society was demonstrated throughout the study.

Tenet 2: Skeptic towards legal claims of neutrality, objectivity, colorblindness, and meritocracy. Several participants wanted to claim neutrality and colorblindness about themselves. They wanted to avoid race and their racialized identities. Even though many of them would end up contradicting themselves or acknowledge they felt different than other students (who were not Asian Americans), they wanted to be neutral and objective about race. They wanted to be colorblind.

Jimmy discussed how he only thought about race when he needed to fill out paper work.

Umm... ok. I've lived in (the Midwest) my whole life. I was born on a farm... small town. 700-800 people. It has not changed in size the entire time we've been there...I grew up there and went to school there, like a normal kid (laughter). Didn't think my ethnicity never really came into play. Except for when I had to fill out the bubbles on test forms or whatever.

He shared that his race never interfered with his relationships and he never thought about his ethnicity. He laughed because he thought it was absurd that anyone would judge him on his race. In his small town, his race and ethnicity were rendered invisible. However, CRT challenged the idea of colorblindness. Also, Jimmy shared that his suitemates immediately knew he is biracial and could "see his Asian side".

Additionally, Rachael discussed how her race and her sexual orientation should not matter to herself and anyone else.

I like that I am bi-racial or whatever. I don't know. I just think I'm Rachael. Honestly, I just ... that's what I say to everybody. They always ask, "Are you a lesbian? Are you bi?" I'm like, "I'm Rachael." I don't like labels. I guess that's the thing. I don't like labels. I'm just Rachael. I don't care if I'm black, white, whatever. I'm just myself.

She wanted to remove all the labels. She felt like they were not important; she knew who she was. She shared her discomfort with identities but then she will reference how her parents wanted her to be like other Asian kids and major in pharmacy. She understood how her parents worried about her not having Asian

values and then unwilling to care for her sister. She may have wanted to rid herself of labels (and identities), but she could not. Others labeled her easily.

Some of the participants very much wanted to be colorblind because they may have thought it would be easier to blend in with others. They attend a predominantly White institution and they grew up in a predominantly White space. Some of them found friends that accepted them but they never spoke about race. Jimmy, with his biracial identity, was told he looked biracial, but no one has addressed it. No one acknowledge his biracial identity. He has learned not to discuss his biracial identity, because it is *just like the others*. Rachael has learned that her race and her sexual orientation identities are best not discussed. Her family members bring up their ethnic background, Vietnamese to one another, but they moved away from a racially diverse neighborhood to a predominantly White neighborhood, which is considered a *better* area to live. Despite what Jimmy and Rachael identified, they have shown how they have contradicted themselves. Their claim for objectivity and colorblindness should be understood with skepticism.

Tenet 3: Challenges ahistoricism and group advantage and disadvantage. Takaki (1989) provided a complex narrative of Asian migration patterns to America. His work focused on history and he provided context to the diversity among Asian Americans. He highlighted how different Asian Americans have and continued to navigate through racism in the U.S. All of the participants had highlighted some disadvantages of being Asian American. However, one of the participants, John was critical of the university's programs centered on diversity. He

touched upon the frustration about learning about the programs' goals of diversifying the institution and then the program's exclusion of Asian Americans.

How dare you classify the entire group of people (Asian Americans) and say they're all financially better than Black-Americans and Latino-Americans. Especially in my community in (this part of the Midwest), in the 90s where everyone was ... (working at) low wage jobs and you're trying to say that they're all the same. How dare you say, as a multi-cultural organization, to make that false statement ... That's what I would say to (this program), like, "You don't have the right to say that you're a multi-cultural ... especially when you don't try to look at all sides of the story. The fact that you're also a university program, that is just so ignorant and stupid of you to do that.

John felt the program did not understand Asian Americans and that is why Asian Americans should not be overlooked. His anger and frustration was connected to the fact that this multicultural program did not try to understand more about his community. He questioned the institution and program's lack of data that informed the decision to keep Asian Americans from joining the program. Further, John was angry that this program was part of the university, which has promoted diversity and equity, was not willing to investigate to be more inclusive.

Further, he wanted the program to think about Asian Americans as a diverse group with different communities that belong to it. Thus, when a program has excluded all Asian Americans, certain communities are being clumped in and they have very different forms of capital and connection to society.

If you stay in their program all throughout high school ...you get your tuition pay for all 4 year's. (The program) they excluded Asians. They accepted all other races except for Asians. I'm like why? And they said Asians do better than everyone else. I was like whoa, what kinds statistics are you getting from? They were like, oh well, Asians are in the sciences. What are you talking about? Everyone's (Southeast Asian American) parents work in a factory. How is (the university) able to say that like they know what they're talking about when they take statistics from other states and put them as a whole and all Asian Americans are like this? Are you even distinguishing between international Asians and Asian Americans? Are you distinguishing East Asian Americans communities in California with Asian American communities in (the Midwest)? That's (messed) up.

If one does not understand the history surrounding Southeast Asians or understand the historical differences between Asian international students and Asian American students, then a program may lump all the populations together. However, Takaki (1989) cautioned against it. Takaki wrote about the history of Asian communities and how their migration patterns affect their participation into American society, including education. John, compared to other participants, was more knowledgeable about history and racism around him. He was able to articulate the tensions more fully because of his life experiences. His parents' deaths and his desire to learn about their experiences led him to be more skeptical and understand how their life experiences continue to affect him. John has continued to share his knowledge of Laotian history with his peers.

Tenet 4: Experimental Knowledge of People of Color. Within understanding experiential knowledge of communities of color, counternarratives derive from research, literature, and personal and professional experiences (Solorzano & Yosso, 2001). In this study, the focus has been on students' personal and academic experiences. Asian Americans have been part of dominant stories about meritocracy (Inkelas, 2003). However, the participants in this study shared some of their experiences that challenge how they face racism and discrimination from other communities of color. One of the tensions that Asian Americans have continued to face is how they have been racially triangulated. They have been identified as inferior to White people and superior to African Americans (Kim, 1999) and probably above Latinos as well. John shared his experienced with how he has been racialized.

They always talk about Latinos and Blacks and that's our discussion about race in America. They don't talk about that in the media and the media has such a huge important part and then Asian-Americans are like, "Oh, I'm just going to go" ... I think my professor (of Journalism) was talking about it yesterday how ... politicians create this kind of illusion, "No, that's not a problem. You just think it's a problem, but really it's not a problem" that kind of manipulation.

In class, John has learned how his perspective, as an Asian American, can be intentionally overlooked. This speaks to the importance of his voice and experiences. In certain ways, another student spoke to how being an Asian American transfer student challenged how people perceive Asian Americans and

community colleges. Sonny spoke about how Asian Americans, who are transfer students, face conflicting stereotypes.

Let's say if another Asian-American were to judge an Asian transfer student, they would probably be like, 'Oh, he might be the poor Asian or he might be the dumb Asian.' Whereas if it's a different nationality or a different American ethnicity, they'd be like, 'No, Asian people are still smart.' There are different Americans where they know the dumb Asian does exist, so they might still lean towards the community or the idea that they might look down on them, but leans more towards they're still smart.

Sonny touches on how being an Asian American transfer student has been a counterstory in it of itself. There have been stereotypes tied to Asian Americans being intelligent and then community college students not being as bright. Both are stereotypes that are not true, but they are part of the dominant narrative.

One of the most troubling signs about dominant narrative would be connected to how students perceive their academic choices. A dominant narrative would be that Asians (including Asian Americans) prefer STEM over humanities, a practical major over a major of interest. John shared, "Academically, it's really hard. I had to double-major. I had to find a business. If journalism doesn't work out, if acting doesn't work out, I have something to fall upon." John preferred journalism, but understood how business would be a good contingency plan to have. When students discussed their academic major choice, and how their family members impacted them, it challenged a dominant narrative about Asians' preference STEM academic majors.

Additionally, another piece of knowledge, that one of the participant's shared that challenged dominant narrative, was how predominantly White institution created tension for Asian Americans. John shared,

I grew up with a lot of Asian and White friends, but um... It started to like turning out like they weren't accepting of me anymore...I think that predominantly white campus help them to become more racist toward me. Which is like really surprising, they never did that in my home town, and Asian jokes. Your hair is not good enough. Your skin color is not good enough. You're not good enough to get women cause you're Asian. It really bothered me. Why are you pointing out my race all of a sudden?

Racism is not simply one act of violence or the use of a racial slur. John explained that he experienced racism in a less forceful way, but equally as impactful. His *friends*, who he had known since middle school, began to make more comments concerning his race and his inferiority due to his ethnic background. He described the predominantly white institution (significantly less diverse than community college) made have had an impact on them. Focusing on Critical Race Theory, race was central. However, the participants have other identities that have impacted their educational journeys.

Intersectionality

Intersectionality was a conceptual framework that could be important in this study. Based on what the participants shared, the intersecting identities (class, sexual orientation, and others) of Asian American transfer students greatly impacted

them. Crenshaw (1991) explained that any one framework or identity can never fully explain someone's perspective. People do not walk into a room as one identity; they navigate society with intersecting identities.

Two students identified as members of the LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender) community. Although both participants mentioned that their LGBT identity did not impact their educational experiences, only one of them informed her family and friends about her lesbian identity. She shared that she is living with her partner and considers her partner as one of the most supportive people in her life. The other participant identified as bisexual. Although he said that he is not hiding his sexuality, he has yet to tell his family members, his friends, and even his roommates. He expressed concerns about his family members' judgments. Further, he has not reached out to resources dedicated to LGBT students and he has not connected with any student service providers.

Another identity that was salient in this study was class, socioeconomic status. All of the students cited costs as one of the reasons to pursue an education through the community college system. All of the participants explained that the cost of higher education was too great for them to pay. Asking students to identify their class was challenging because none of the students could identify their class. One student shared that his family was going through bankruptcy, but he has always identified with being in middle class. In his statement, he identified the challenges of understanding one's class and how hard it was for him to understand the impact of his class as he is navigating through his education.

Additionally, the cost of education was always in the participants' minds.

Rachael explained,

I just looked at the Web site, \$103 per credit compared to here. To (go to a) university, it's just a lot more. I knew that general classes and everything ... they're the same, they will transfer, so it was, why am I going to go to a university, where I didn't have any scholarships and pay the whole tuition, when I can go to (community college) and get the same?

She understood that her costs would be lower at a community college and she found that to be very important. She felt she could get a comparable education at a lower cost. Cost of higher education has become more of an issue for many students. However, for the participants in this study, their class background, race, and understanding of lower costs at a community college all merged to create a situation that needs to be explored.

Findings In Relation to Existing Literature

The five major themes that emerged from this study were (a) parents' expectations, (b) academic majors, (c) a sense of community at community colleges, (d) feelings of being old and alone, and (e) the impact of socioeconomic class. The following is an overview of how the findings related to the existing literature on the functions of community colleges, transfer function, and Asian American and Pacific Islander student population.

Functions of Community College

Community colleges have several functions (Dougherty, 1994) and one of the main functions has been to provide open access and serving individuals who could not pursue higher education through any other means (Bragg, 2001; Nora, 2000). The participants in this study were not limited to community colleges. Actually, four out of the five participants were admitted to a university, but due to cost and institutional fit, they chose to attend a community college. Three of them would agree with Boswell (2004), that the increasing cost of higher education has forced more students to explore community colleges. However, Dougherty (1994) and Dowd (2003) critiqued community colleges as duplicating social class by directing lower socioeconomic students to pursue vocational education.

All of the participants had identified early on they wanted to transfer. Only one participant was exposed to vocational education; she received training to be a pharmacy technician. However, she never spoke with a faculty member or advisor about vocational education. A peer told her that she could get experience as a pharmacy technician by taking a test and the future employer would pay for the exam. She was the only student who worked more than part time and identified with her employment as well as being a student (Kim et al, 2010).

Transfer Function

Transfer rates have decreased over time (Rendon, 1993; Zamani, 2001) and Berger and Malaney (2003) have urged campus leaders to welcome community college transfer students and provide opportunities for them to succeed. Zamani

stated the importance of community colleges to prepare students and for four year universities to understand the importance of transfer function as it connects with upward mobility. For the participants in this study, they felt that their community college experiences were very positive. However, some of the participants did identify their academic struggles and four year universities were able to adequately assist them in their transition.

In studying transfer students, more and more students do not follow the linear model of attending community colleges for two years and then transferring to a four year university. Currently only 37% of students follow that plain (National Student Clearinghouse Research Center, 2012). Many students attend community colleges for more than two years and many students transfer in different ways – reverse, horizontal, and vertical. In this study, one participant, horizontally transfer from university to another university, and then reverse transfer to a community, and then vertically transfer to his current institution. Three participants spent more than two years at the community college.

One of the themes of this study included participants expressing how old they felt because they have been in school longer than their native student peers. Transfer students have nontraditional pathways and these participants exemplified different routes students take to try to achieve their goals.

All the students were transfer ready (Hagedorn, 2004), they knew what courses were required of them to transfer. Additionally, all of the participants felt that time spent studying increased post-transfer at the four year institution (Berger & Malaney, 2003). Four students were employed pre-transfer. Post-transfer, only two

of them continued to work; the other two students shared that they needed more time to focus on their studies. Berger and Malaney were able to identify that White transfer students were more satisfied with their post transfer experience. The Asian American transfer students in this study did not define their experience as satisfactory.

Asian American and Pacific Islander Student Population

This study was created with the intention of including Pacific Islander students. However, none of the participants identified as Pacific Islander. The identity of Asian American was created in the U.S. (Pyon, Cao, & Li, 2007). One of the participants eloquently explained that he knew he is Asian American, but he felt that the term was vague and did not include some of his experiences (Hoeffel, Rastogi, Kim, & Shahid, (2012).

In conducting research about AAPI's, scholars face certain challenges. Several scholars have stated that one of the greatest challenges has been to document and present barriers that Asian Americans face in their education (Chou & Feager, 2008; Museus & Chang; 2010; Museus & Kiang, 2009). This study reaffirms the scholarship that Asian Americans face racism and differential treatment by institutional leaders. The Asian American transfer students do not have access to certain institutional programs designed for other students of color and they face racism.

In studying Asian American transfer students, the study provides an example of the bimodal distribution. The participants in this study are from lower

socioeconomic status families. Egan (2007) identified Asian Americans as being perceived as overrepresented at elite institutions, but the participants attended community college and currently attend a less selective institution. Four of the participants identified as Southeast Asians and their parents' income level was the largest predictor of selective institutions attendance (Teranishi et al, 2004).

Asian Americans, who attended community colleges, were more likely to be underprepared in English and Mathematics (Lew et al, 2005). In this study, the participants did not have noticeable English deficiencies, and they were all born in the U.S. None of the participants were English language learners. Several of them discussed the challenges of taking university level courses. One participant shared that he was good in math in high school but he was unable to keep up at the university level. His narrative and others' experiences challenge what the field of higher education has documented about Asian Americans. Overall, the participants in this study challenged the myth of the model minority (Chou and Feager, 2008).

Myth of the model minority. The myth of the model minority can be understood through five major areas: (a) affirmative and negative actions, (b) racial discrimination, lingering stereotypes, and campus climates, (c) depression, (d) family support and immigrant narratives and (e) academic majors and occupation choices.

Inkelas (2003) explained that Asian Americans “feel resentful about their chances for college admission, given that they receive neither advantages inherent to the dominant group (e.g. legacy admissions), nor those accorded to other subordinate groups (e.g., affirmative action)” (p.640). One of the participants shared the same sentiment. John felt that he was not given an opportunity to participate in a

STEM initiative program because he is Asian American. However, as a Southeast Asian American, he is the first in his family to attend college and his parents do not have a college degree. Therefore, as a person of color, he should have been admitted to the program. Further, as a transfer student, he was concerned that he would receive fewer opportunities than native students. This tension surrounding affirmative action has left Asian Americans in a difficult position, and Asian American transfer students with fewer resources to help them.

The campus climates for Asian Americans who attend less racially diverse institutions were less satisfied with campus climate (Chang, 2005; Park, 2009). Some participants in this study would concur with previous studies. One student highlighted how he was frustrated that there were only one Asian American organization and fewer organizations pertaining to specific ethnicities. Additionally, two participants, who went to a less racially diverse high school, felt that race was discussed much more at the university. Two participants were able to pin point racism at the university and contrast it to the welcoming environments at the community colleges. Thus, campus climates for Asian Americans should be reviewed more specifically in future research.

The third component of the myth of model minority would be depression. Asian Americans may feel more depressed, experience more social anxiety, and more socially isolated than White students (Chang, 1996; Cress & Ikeda, 2003; Okazaki, 1997). This study was not designed to compare the two groups. However, one of the students shared his frustration and his sadness about being alone. When it was suggested to him to seek out counseling services, his response was that the

counselors did not understand him. The counselors were not culturally competent to his perspectives and his lived experiences. His depression would not be healed when the counselors do not understand how to manage it.

The fourth component is tied to family support and immigrant narratives. Park (2008) explained that for many AAPI students, narratives regarding immigration have been centered on two themes: (a) parents came to this country so the children can receive an education and (b) parents experience hardships but their children's successes made it worthwhile. The participants who identify more with Asian American identities concurred with both points. However, the two participants who identify as more American did not discuss the family narrative as an immigration story. Rather, those parents wanted their children to do well for economic benefits. Three of the participants discussed their experiences as sacrifice for their families because they wanted to provide for family members.

The last component of the myth would be tied to academic majors and occupation choices. One of the themes emerged from this study was academic majors, how the participants came to their decisions. Ogbu (1983) explained that AAPIs tend to choose occupations where discrimination is mediated through credentials that require less on connections and more on content knowledge, which may explain why STEM fields have a greater number of AAPI's. In this study, the participants shared how their family members pushed them towards medicine, pharmacy, and engineering. Although Ogbu wrote about occupations that AAPIs pursue to combat racism about thirty years ago, AAPI families have continued the practice to navigate through American society. There was one participant who was

not pushed to pursue STEM fields. His biracial background may have played a role in how his parents viewed education and his dad has a college degree.

Summary of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore and understand Asian American transfer students' experiences, specifically their community college, transfer process, and post transfer experiences. The study took place at a large, research intensive, predominantly White institution located in the Midwest. Data were collected through three individual interviews with each participant and the all the interviews were recorded and transcribed. The transcripts were analyzed through open coding.

Critical Race Theory and intersectionality served as the theoretical and conceptual lenses for this study, which allowed for considerations regarding race and racism and intersecting identities, including class. Five participants were in this study, four men and one woman identified as Asian American in their official records. The research questions guiding this study pertained to perceptions of community college experiences, transfer experiences, and the post transfer experiences at the four year institution.

Perceptions of Community College Experiences

The participants in this study felt that their community college experiences were very positive. Two of the participants highlighted how their community college instructors were helpful and made them feel special and intelligent. One of the participants explained how he felt the community college students were more open

and understanding of one another's experiences. He shared that students at community colleges were more diverse, and therefore he did not stand out and feel alone. Race had a significantly smaller role in how students defined themselves. They may have identified as Asian American, but it mattered less at the community colleges.

One of the participant felt that the transition from high school to community college was seamless. She shared that her instructors were available and identified community college instructors as more effective than their four year institution counterparts. However, another student shared how lonely he felt at the community college because no one was there to learn. Not all of his peers were invested in their education as he was.

Perceptions of Transfer Experiences

In discussing their transfer experiences, one of the participant said that he obtained all the information, application, and his transcript online. He said it was straightforward and simple. I believe from their perspectives that they felt it was easy. All of the participants knew they wanted to transfer and they were high achievers. However, one participant went through horizontal transfer, reverse transfer, and then vertically transfer to the current institution. In this study, he felt transferring was about finding a better fit for himself.

All the students identified transferring as the bureaucratic process of applying to the institution. They did not consider transferring as a process about course selection nor a conversation with advisors. They shared that they wished more

information is provided about financial aid and course offerings. Advisors have information but the students were unaware of (or underestimated) the knowledge that community college counselors possess.

More emphasis should be on transfer preparation and coursework planning. Students were baffled by how their coursework connected to transferring and how or if each course would transfer. None of the students had parents who attended community college. Only one student had a parent who attended college. In many ways, the transfer process was unknown to the students and family members. Some participants expressed that they wished they had more information. Community college students need to be prepared for the post transfer experiences beginning at the community college.

Perceptions of Post Transfer Experiences

Although one participant has enjoyed the social atmosphere at being a four year institution, other participants highlighted their loneliness and isolation at a four year institution. The students identified their post transfer experiences critically. Two of the participants did not feel their race had anything to do with their isolation. They had positive feelings towards the institution. However, the other three participants were able to identify ways in which the four year institution was a challenging space to navigate in connection to their race.

Three participants identified how their race played a role in how other students viewed them. One of them shared incidences where overt racism occurred. All the students spoke about international Asian student population growth and how

it impacted how other (non-Asian) students perceived them. Further, all the students identified how race and their family members' expectations were connected.

One of the challenges identified by the participants included the lack of awareness of transfer students. Other students would find out their age or find out they went to a community college. They would hear disparaging remarks about their age or their attendance at a community college.

None of the participants discussed any mentoring relationship with faculty members or staff members. Their encounters with faculty members were minimal outside the classroom. In comparison their community college experiences, they received advice and spoke with their instructors frequently. The participants had been at the university for various time periods. The students who had enrolled at the university for a longer period of time became accustomed to the policies and culture. For the participants who were experiencing their first semester at the university, they were finding it challenging.

Limitations and Strengths

The findings of this study are limited to Asian American transfer students from one predominantly white institution in the Midwest, which is a large research institution. The results cannot be generalized to all Asian American students. One should not expect experiences to mirror one another precisely at other institutions. However, the descriptions should provide insight to the dearth of issues pertaining to Asian American transfer students at other institutions.

Recruitment of participants was challenging. Although a list of emails was provided, the small number of respondents was a limitation. However, each

participant was willing to share personal stories and experiences with deep descriptions. The participants in this study do not represent all the different ethnic identities within the Asian American communities and no participant identified as a Pacific Islander. There were more Southeast Asians than other ethnic group members, which spoke to the geographical location of the institution.

The strengths of the study include the detailed and rich descriptions from each participant. As an Asian American, I had some insider connections and I shared that I attended a community college to take classes. I had some interaction with a few of the participants prior to the study. Through the study, I was able to gain more insight into their experiences. I was able to build a deep relationship with the participants. To develop these relationships resulted in extended and deeper levels of engagement (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I believe my participants were transparent about their experiences and perspectives.

Ethical Considerations

Throughout the process, the greatest ethical consideration was confidentiality and anonymity of participants. Interviews were conducted in closed rooms; audio files and transcripts were always password protected. Being considerate of the fact that participants shared very personal experiences made it easier to be sensitive to their time and privacy. The steps identified in Chapter 3 were maintained to protect the participants' confidentiality to the fullest extent.

There was one moment in this study, when I felt a student's mental stability needed additional support. I quickly stopped the interview and focused the discussion on mental health resources. Prior to the start of the study, I familiarized

myself with institutional services and individuals who could provide additional support for the students. For all the participants, I encouraged them to speak to academic advisors and faculty members to learn more about future academic and professional opportunities.

Implications for Practice

The findings from this study provided a number of implications for practice for community colleges and four year institutions. Findings from this study offered a deeper understanding for these two different types of institutions that can further enhance and validate (potential) Asian American transfer students.

For both types of institutions, the importance of understanding the complex backgrounds and experiences that the Asian American transfer students have experienced has great implications for practice. The dominant discourse focused on Asian Americans excelling, and certain members are achieving baccalaureates and graduate degrees. However, some Asian Americans, particularly from lower socioeconomic status or first generation student may need more guidance. One implication in practice for institutions would be to review their policies and programs and consider whether or not Asian Americans have been excluded based on data or on assumption.

One participant highlighted that he was excluded from an institutional multicultural program because he is Asian American. The program receives state level funding and follows national policy, which should be review and reconsider. Further, institutions should explore and understand the Asian American communities they serve. Potential questions and demographic data to uncover would include first

generation proportion, expected family contribution, language spoken at home, and other information that affects students' academic performances.

The following implications have been divided into implications for community colleges and four year institutions. However, the larger implication may be the connections (or lack thereof) that students face between institutions. Several students mentioned that they wished they had more information at the community college about the four year institution.

Community college leadership, including advisors, should be more knowledgeable in four year institutions' policies and opportunities. Additionally, four year institutions' leaders, and especially academic advisors, should be more informed about transfer students' needs. The largest implication maybe that both institutional leaders, particularly when some institutions transfer and receive a large proportion of students, to come together and figure out a more seamless transition for students.

Implications for Community Colleges

In this study, the participants spoke highly of their community college experiences. They felt they learned a lot from their instructors and they were welcomed at the various campuses. I think all of the participants had a connection to the community college they attended. I hope other leaders of community colleges take note of how a community college student identity can be and should be very positive.

Several of the participants shared their experiences post transfer, and they experienced transfer shock (Laanan, 1996). They struggled. I think community colleges have some responsibilities in helping better prepare, not only for academic transition, but also prepare students to understand they are entering a different environment. One of the students explained how he did not need to see an advisor for transferring because all the resources were available on the internet. Having resources available at all hours may be helpful, but it does not replace an advisor having a conversation regarding the transition the students face after they transfer. More conversations between advisors and students may help students be better prepared for the transition.

Implications for Four Year Institutions

Four year institutions need to recognize the Asian American transfer population as a growing trend. Students expressed concerns about their academic performance and academic major selection. Advisors and Asian American transfer students should meet to discuss their academic goals. Additionally, advisors and transfer students should meet at least a second time in the students second semester to follow up on progress. Provide advice that pertains to academic majors, and options available to them. Specifically for Asian Americans, family members play a significant role in students' decision making. Thus, institutions should be cognizant of families and the impact family members have on students.

Additionally, if transfer students need to fulfill any institutional requirement, such as a library technology course (in which first year students tend to take the

courses together) provide a section for transfer students, so they can start to build a transfer student community through that course.

Financial aid services should seek out additional resources for all transfer students. At times, Asian American transfer students may be excluded from resources focused on diversifying the institution and institutions should address the issue if they want to recruit and retain Asian American students.

Further, several of the participants mentioned how native students were unaware of the transfer student population. Institutions have been educating students about *diversity*, but they may not realize diversity includes different life experiences. Native students being more aware of transfer students may help transfer students adjust to the four year institution.

Recommendations for Future Research

So much of this study was connected to race. As a scholar who focuses on minoritized populations, race is very crucial. However, one does not walk into a space as one identity or another. One walks into a room with multiple identities and lived experiences. The participants in this study, identified as Asian Americans, and they identified as other roles and identities. Some of them are siblings, first generation college students, from lower socioeconomic statuses, and many more identities and lived experiences which shaped them. In the field of higher education, scholars have focused on specific groups. They should continue to do so and understand the complexities of participants' lives and consider the intersectionality of identities and lived experiences.

Further, two of the participants had ancestors who identify as White. Only one identified as biracial. The other participant identified as Vietnamese American. As the demographics change, more individuals who identify as Asian may also identify with other ethnic/racialized identities. More research should be inclusive of Asians who identify as other identities as well as the interethnic relationships of Asian Americans. Three participants identify as multiple Asian ethnic identities, what does it mean to be Tai Dam, Chinese, and Vietnamese?

The depth of research on Asian Americans has increased but the width of their experiences has not grown dramatically. More specifically, more research questions regarding Asian Americans and intersecting identities should be explored. This study focused on transfer students and they successfully navigated through community colleges. One participant shared his experience with horizontal transfer, reverse transfer, and vertical transfer. There could be some students who do not transfer. More research regarding Asian American community college students including older adults, career and technical education, and those that drop out of community colleges should be included.

Research regarding specific ethnic groups within the Asian American has been added, the political and educational arena continue to view Asian American Pacific Islander as one group. Thus, research should challenge that perspective and discuss the tensions of such scholarship.

As this study demonstrated, focusing on a specific racialized community raised questions that require more examination of other identities. For example, scholars may want to center a study on class and the selectivity of the institution.

How to low socioeconomic status Asian American transfer students navigate less selective and highly selective institutions? How to high socioeconomic status Asian American transfer students navigate less selective and highly selective institutions?

Additionally, some of the participants in this study spoke about Asian international students. Although there has been an increased in literature regarding Asian international students, there seems to a lack of literature focused on each group's perceptions of one another. Their perceptions of each other may seem unimportant or disconnected, but Asian international students, who decide to stay in the U.S., become Asian Americans. The process has not been studied and higher education has greater numbers of Asian international students who choose to stay in America. This trend should be explored.

The exclusion of Asian Americans in policy discussions needs to be explored, particularly as it pertains to low income and first generation students. Out of the participants, four of them identify as being first generation college students and three of them are first in their family to attend college. As I reflect more on this process, I hope to continue to contribute to higher education scholarship, focusing on Asian Americans.

Personal Reflection

When I think about this study and the process of research, I feel an immense gratitude for all the scholarly activities that I had the opportunity to participate. By the time I became ABD, all but dissertation, I truly felt I had the skills to do this. I may have felt frustrated at the timing of everything, but overall, I never questioned my ability. I felt I had written proposals, and I had written literature reviews. I had written

methods sections for other papers. I felt confident because my mentors and my advisor have asked me to do many of these tasks already. The only difference this time would be the length and to try not to let the word 'dissertation' intimidate me.

I love research. I love how research can answer questions and bring new perspectives to educators. I love listening to students share their experiences. I enjoy reading the literature. I probably could have written more in the literature review, but I did not want to make this process too long.

From beginning to end, this process will have taken close to twelve months. Sometimes, I feel guilty that I did not spend more, or have more time to spend, on each step. I would have wanted to spend more time on the proposal. I would have wanted more time interviewing students. The dissertation, because it is the culmination of my learning and the occurrence is at the terminating point in the doctoral experience, created a tension. I needed to get it done, and I wanted it to keep on going.

When I think back to the interviews, my gratitude towards the participants cannot be put into words. Their courage and their willingness to share their experiences made this process easy and more difficult. Easy in the sense that their experiences made this dissertation do-able. The moment data collection ended, a burden was removed from my shoulders. Their participation made this process more challenging and another burden was placed on my shoulders because I want to present their narratives truthfully and sincerely. I got to know them and like them very much, and it made analyzing their experiences overwhelming.

I related their experiences to my friends and family members who were Asian American transfer students. I possessed a sense of responsibility in documenting their experiences and to conducting more research about Asian Americans in higher education and especially in the community college and transfer sector.

Working on this dissertation made me realize how much I want to work with and in the community colleges. As a scholar who wants to contribute more to a specific minoritized identity's literature base, community colleges play such an important role. Community colleges are not only institutions; they serve so many different communities and assist students in achieving various aspirations. Community college leaders' goals may include athletics and grants, but their focuses have always aligned with students' educational ambitions. I feel much more certain where I want to spend my energy and focus my career aspirations on community college students and administrators.

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APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Interview 1

1. Briefly describe your childhood and tell me about your family.
 - a. Immigration & Family History
 - b. Knowledge of Family History
 - c. When did you first realize your race and or ethnicity?
2. What led to your decision in attending a community college?
 - a. Academics
 - i. How prepared were you for college? Were there certain things you would do differently?
 - ii. Did you have specific goals when you first started at the community college? What were they?
 - b. Costs
 - c. Other reasons
3. What were some of your experiences at the community colleges?
 - a. What were your academic major or academic interests? How did or if the community college experience shape your academic interests
 - b. What support was available to you?
 - i. People
 - ii. Programs
4. When did you decide you wanted to transfer?

- a. What did you know about transferring to the four year institution prior to transferring?
 - b. Who helped you transfer? (Discuss who may not have been helpful or barriers to transferring.)
5. When you first transferred to this institution:
- a. What was your academic major? Has it changed?
 - b. How did you do academically in your first semester? How were you feeling?
 - c. What helped you adjust to being at a 4-year? What surprised you?
6. Throughout your community college, transfer, or after you transferred experiences, how do you think being AAPI affected any of it?

Interview 2 & Interview 3 will not have an interview protocol. All discussions will be centered on what the participants share in their first interview. Potential topics of discussion:

- Being AAPI
- Family relationships
- Perceptions of race at the community college and at the four year institution
 - Campus Climate
 - Model Minority
 - Racialization
- Immigration

- Support
 - Institutional, social, family

APPENDIX B: INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Title of Study: Asian American Pacific Islander Transfer Students

Investigators: Joyce Lui

This is a research study. Please take your time in deciding if you would like to participate. Please feel free to ask questions at any time.

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study is to learn more about Asian American Pacific Islander transfer students' experiences at the community college, transfer process, and after they have transferred to [REDACTED]. This study will focus on understanding their experiences at the community colleges and at [REDACTED]. Additionally, the study will focus on race or racism may have affected your experiences at community colleges and at [REDACTED]. You are being invited to participate in this study because you self- identify as Asian American Pacific Islander and transferred from a community college to attend [REDACTED]. You should not participate if you are under 18, do not identify as Asian American Pacific Islander, and did not transfer from a community college.

DESCRIPTION OF PROCEDURES

If you agree to participate, you will be asked to participate in three separate interviews. Each interview will take approximately 45 minutes. Each of the three

interviews will be recorded and transcribed. Please note that all audio files will be destroyed once the interviews are transcribed. In the transcriptions, pseudonyms will be used. After the first interview, your interview will be transcribed and the second interview will be scheduled. After the second interview, I will transcribe the recording. A third interview will be set up.

Potential Questions:

Briefly describe your childhood and tell me about your family.

What led to your decision in attending a community college? (Academics, Costs, Etc.)

What were some of your experiences at the community colleges?

When did you decide you wanted to transfer?

When you first transferred to this institution:

What was your academic major? Has it changed?

How did you do academically in your first semester? How were you feeling?

What helped you adjust to being at a 4-year? What surprised you?

Throughout your community college, transfer, or after you transferred experiences, how do you think being AAPI affected any of it?

Your interviews will be recorded and transcribed. You will have access to your interview transcripts. You will be given an opportunity to review the transcripts of all the interviews and redact any information you do not want retained as data for the study.

RISKS

This study is centered on studying race. The topic of race may cause emotional or psychological distress or discomfort when discussing race or any other personal or sensitive topics. At any point, you may pause or stop the interview or end your participation in the research study.

BENEFITS

If you decide to participate in this study there will be no direct benefit to you. It is hoped that the information gained in this study will benefit society by informing educators and scholars the importance of understanding Asian American Pacific Islander student experiences.

COSTS AND COMPENSATION

You will not have any costs from participating in this study. You will not be compensated for participating in this study.

PARTICIPANT RIGHTS

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary and you may refuse to participate or leave the study at any time. If you decide to not participate in the study or leave the study early, it will not result in any penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. During the interviews, you can skip any questions that you do not wish to answer.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Records identifying participants will be kept confidential to the extent permitted by applicable laws and regulations and will not be made publicly available.

However, federal government regulatory agencies, auditing departments of Iowa State University, and the Institutional Review Board (a committee that reviews and approves human subject research studies) may inspect and/or copy your records for quality assurance and data analysis. These records may contain private information.

To ensure confidentiality to the extent permitted by law, the following measures will be taken: only the primary investigator will have access to audio files of the interviews and transcriptions of the interviews. In the transcriptions, pseudonyms will be used. The information linking the identity of participants to their pseudonyms will be kept in a separate file. All of the audio files of the interviews will be deleted once they have been transcribed. Only the primary investigator will have access to the electronic transcriptions. The data (transcriptions) will be kept for the duration of the study and future studies analyzing the same data, without exceeding five years.

All the files will be saved on a password protected computer. If the results are published, your identity will remain confidential.

Although such steps will be taken to ensure confidentiality, due to the small population and the nature of the study, confidentiality may not be completely protected.

QUESTIONS OR PROBLEMS

You are encouraged to ask questions at any time during this study.

For further information about the study contact Dr. Linda S. Hagedorn, 515-294-5746 or Joyce Lui, 213-479-2022.

If you have any questions about the rights of research subjects or research-related injury, please contact the IRB Administrator, (515) 294-4566, IRB@iastate.edu, or Director, (515) 294-3115, Office for Responsible Research, Iowa State University, Ames, Iowa 50011.

PARTICIPANT SIGNATURE

Your signature indicates that you voluntarily agree to participate in this study, that the study has been explained to you, that you have been given the time to read the document, and that your questions have been satisfactorily answered. You will receive a copy of the written informed consent prior to your participation in the study.

Participant's Name (printed): _____

(Participant's Signature)

(Date)