Supporting the Success of Female Asian American College Students

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Abstract

This essay outlines important research on female Asian American college students as they weave through the shared experiences of college campus life, and through the multidimensional complexities of identity development. In it, I suggest that colleges should develop programs outside of so-called traditional developmental models and celebrate the history, traditions, and contributions of all student groups through relevant programs and support. In particular, a more formalized theory of development needs to be developed in regard to female Asian American students. The aforementioned point of view is supported in the research literature.

Introduction

Research on college students’ psychosocial development began to emerge in the 1960s and since then has informed college administrators how to better work with the population. Erikson (1959) was one of the first theorists to apply psychosocial theory to the development of adults. Theorists such as Chickering (1969) helped a generation of professionals better understand college students’ development. Chickering and Reisser (1993) examined how Erikson’s research could be applied to college students, creating what they called “seven vectors of development.” These vectors examined a wide range of abilities including developing identity, becoming interdependent, and managing emotions. Although Chickering’s theory of college-student development provided administrators with a useful framework for working with students, it soon became clear that not all students could be sewed in the same way due to gender and cultural differences. Chickering and Reisser’s theory was developed based
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on research with White American male, traditional-aged participants at predominantly private institutions. This research excluded much of the college population, namely women and “students of color” (McEwen & Roper, 1994; Pope, 1993).

Studies by Cross (1995) and Gilligan (1982) expanded the view of these earlier theories to include minorities and women. Researchers examined how African American students perceived their world, and in doing so developed the racial-identity-development model for Black students (cited in Tatum, 1997, p. 53). Gilligan focused studies solely on women, arguing that women’s development is “better understood by such concepts as connectedness, responsibility to others, and care” (cited in Dannells & Wilson, 1993, p. 14). Female college students have also been the focus of recent research. Among student affairs administrators, Gilligan (1982) is the recognized authority on the key differences in the psychosocial development between male and female college students. Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, and Tarule (1986) stressed the importance of “voice” and level of satisfaction among female college students. More recently, Salter (2003) explored the concept of the “chilly classroom” and studied how female college students interacted with their environment. In a related study, scholars described the factors that encourage college classroom participation among women (Salter & Persaud, 2003).

Asian American college students have received considerable attention from researchers in the past decade. Kim (2001) developed the Asian American identity-development model, outlining how Asian American student development differs from that of their White counterparts. Many researchers have looked at factors that affect Asian American college students, such as coping strategies (Yeh & Wang, 2000), pan ethnicity (Rhoads, Lee, & Yamada, 2002), collective action (Inkelas, 2003), and ethnic awareness (Inkelas, 2004).

Administrators often apply development theories to work more effectively with college students. These theories can help administrators and students make sense of their experiences and develop strategies for dealing with challenges. Problems arise, however,
when traditional developmental models are applied to all college students. Because Asian American college students make up a significant percentage of today’s college population (Rhoads et al., 2002), more critical research is needed to establish how these students’ experiences compare to traditional developmental theories. Furthermore, Asian American women are an important subgroup in this population that deserves more critical attention and support. New research that compares past theories with current research on this population will assist college administrators in their work with Asian American female college students and, in turn, provide these students with better services and experiences in college. This essay will examine the development of Asian American female college students through this lens and offer implications for faculty and staff to help these students be successful.

Theoretical Base

Psychosocial theories by Chickering (1969) and Gilligan (1982) are the foundation to better understand how college students develop. These studies were chosen due to their extensive use in graduation-preparation programs and by student-affairs practitioners. The comparison of these two theories outlines the key differences in how male and female college students develop. A second theoretical framework is Kim’s (2001) model of Asian American identity development. This theory provides a framework for understanding the specific development of Asian American college students and how their development differs from that of White students.

Empirical research studies that focus on Asian Americans and female college students are outlined here to help inform readers about how this population interfaces with the theories presented. The theories and empirical studies will form the basis for a synthesis that will provide a better understanding of how Asian American female college students develop. Implications for faculty and student-affairs administrators will be offered, based on the synthesis of the research.
Chickering’s Vectors of Development

Several theories have been developed that discuss how college students develop. One of the most recognized theories is Chickering’s (1969) seven vectors of development: developing competence, managing emotions, moving through autonomy toward interdependence, developing mature interpersonal relationships, establishing identity, developing purpose, and developing integrity (p. 3). “Chickering’s vectors are not a step-by-step or linear maturation but rather a process whereby growth comes as a result of stimulation throughout the college years” (Elleven & Spaulding, 1997, p. 6). Researchers showed, however, that the first three vectors generally occur simultaneously and before the last four vectors begin (Hood, n.d., p. 2).

The first vector, developing competence, has three key components: intellectual competence, physical and manual skills, and interpersonal competence. The second vector is managing emotions. The college years are a time of transition, when new and challenging emotions evolve. Two primary emotions that students must learn to manage are aggression and sex (Hood, n.d., p. 2). While in college, students learn how to handle different feelings and try new modes of expression (University of Texas, Dallas, 2004). In the third vector, developing autonomy, college students need less reassurance and approval from others because students begins to trust their feelings and abilities as valid sources of information (University of Texas, Dallas, 2004, p. 3). This vector is critical for college students and the university. College freshmen experience a sense of autonomy as they begin college. The university plays a critical role in helping educate families about how this vector plays out and the emotional strain it may cause for students and their parents. While this vector is developing, the peer group becomes the main reference group (Hood, n.d., p. 2). This third vector was later revised and named “moving through autonomy toward interdependence” (Chickering & Reisser, 1993, p. 117). This revision reflects the completion of the vector, when students have achieved a sense of autonomy and moved toward more interdependent strategies.
The fourth vector, developing mature relationships, consists of more friendly and respectful relationships with others. It is also at this time that a respect for different cultures becomes apparent. Establishing identity, the key vector in this last group,

refers to the self or the person one feels oneself to be. The development of identity depends in part upon the development of the three previous vectors and once a student achieves a solid sense of identity, changes then occur in the remaining three vectors. (Hood, n.d., p. 3)

Identity development also entails negotiating a “realistic and stable self image” (University of Texas, Dallas, 2004, p. 3). Developing purpose has a strong vocational tone, indicating that college students typically develop career goals and aspirations during the final years of college. According to Chickering, this vector is different for men and women.

For males this vector receives its primary thrust from the relationships of increased stability and deepening interests to vocational plans and aspirations. For females, the salience of vocational plans is often complicated by marriage plans or by uncertainties regarding marriage. (Hood, n.d., p. 3)

Developing integrity is the most elusive of the seven vectors and varies greatly among students. This vector involves values clarification and establishing beliefs that guide behavior.

**Gilligan’s Theory of Female-College-Student Development**

Gilligan is a psychologist best known for the book, *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women’s Development* (1982), in which the author challenged Kohlberg’s (1972) research on the moral development of children. Gilligan criticized Kohlberg for being biased toward male tendencies such as a principled way of reasoning, in contrast to a moral way of reasoning that is more widespread among women. Gilligan summarized this point by saying that men
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have a “justice orientation,” whereas women have a “responsibility orientation” (Cypher, 2004, p. 1). This work became the basis for a
different theory about how college women develop, in contrast to
Chickering’s (1969) and Chickering and Reisser’s (1993) research
that focused solely on men.

Gilligan (1982) outlined three stages of moral development in
women. The first stage is the selfish phase in which the focus is on
taking care of oneself when one feels alone. This stage is characterized
by feelings of “powerlessness to affect the world, disappointment with
relationships, and a feeling of disconnection from others” (Gosselin,
2003, p. 313). This stage is concerned primarily with self-preservation
against these external threats.

Soon women begin to feel badly about being in this selfish stage.
Gilligan goes as far as to say it is viewed as doing violence toward
others (as cited in Gosselin, 2003, p. 314). These feelings cause a
woman to “feel it is wrong to act in [her] own interests, and that [she]
should value instead the interests of others. Women equate concern
for themselves with selfishness” (Cypher, 2004, p. 1). Therefore,
women move into the selflessness stage, which is also called the
social or conventional phase. By caring for others, they believe they
will be cared for in turn.

Eventually, women discover that the self can no longer be neglected.
Women feel caught between selfishness and selflessness. It is at this
time—in the third stage called postconventional—that women begin
to evaluate what it means to be a good person, search for honesty
in themselves, and develop feelings of self-worth (Gosselin, 2003,
p. 314). They also develop a strong desire to be connected to others
(Cypher, 2004, p. 1) and become capable of discovering themselves
and others.

Gilligan (1982) identified two “languages” that emerge from
women. The first is a language of autonomy that involves interde-
pendence and is most closely related to Chickering’s (1969) “moving
through autonomy toward interdependence” vector. This language is
concerned with equal treatment of all subjects and one’s moral duty
to care for oneself (Gosselin, 2003, p. 315). The second language is one of responsibility that involves accountability to oneself and responsibility for others. Gilligan’s three stages and two languages formed the basis for what has become known as the “ethics of care,” which contrasts with the male viewpoint of ethics based on justice.

**Kim’s Asian American Identity-Development Model**

First developed in the 1980s, the Asian American identity-development model has been updated to reflect the needs and experiences of current college students (Kim, 2001). Kim developed this model after noticing differences in how college students developed, compared with their White peers. One cultural trait that Americans of Asian heritage share is the “group orientation through which they learn to be sensitive to the expectations of the group and their social environment” (Kim, 2001, p. 67). Somewhat different from other minority groups, Asian American students face positive and negative generalizations or stereotypes. Positive generalizations include that Asians work hard, are technologically adept, are good at mathematics, and focus on education. Negative stereotypes include that Asians are sly, ruthless, untrustworthy, submissive, quiet, foreigners, poor communicators, and not leaders (Kim, 2001, p. 69). Because of these stereotypes, Asian American students experience identity conflict, especially in college, when identity development is most evident (Chickering, 1969).

An Asian American may experience identity conflict as a belief in one’s own inferiority and may have feelings of self-hatred and alienation.

A painful expression of this identity conflict among Asian American women is the practice of creating double folded eyelids (many Asians have single-folded eyelids) either through surgery or by using scotch tape in a vain attempt to meet the beauty standards of the White society. (Kim, 2001, p. 70)
According to Sue and Sue (1999), “such experiences of denial and/or rejection of their Asian heritage contribute toward Asian Americans’ negative self-concept and low self-esteem, both hallmarks of negative identity” (as cited in Kim, 2001, p. 70). These signs of identity conflict point to the need to use a different model of identity development in working with Asian American students.

The Asian American identity-development model has five conceptually distinct, sequential, and progressive stages including ethnic awareness, White identification, awakening to social political consciousness, redirection to Asian American consciousness, and incorporation (Kim, 2001, p. 67). Kim (2001) claimed the five stages are sequential in nature, but do not necessarily happen automatically.

Whether Asian Americans move on to the next stage in their racial identity development is dependent primarily on their social environment, and various factors in this environment determine both the length and the quality of experience in a given stage. (p. 72)

Stage 1, ethnic awareness, takes place prior to Asian Americans entering the school system. Their awareness of their identity is made up of interactions with amity. “Greater exposure to Asian ethnic experiences at this stage leads to a positive self-concept … while less exposure is related to a neutral self-concept and confused ego identity” (Kim, 2001, p. 73). In this sense, it can be seen how stereotypes and internalized oppression can be handed down from generation to generation. In a personal interview, Yi-Baker, Director of MOSAIC Cross-Cultural Center, corroborated by Kim (2001), stated that many Asian American children are protected by their parents, who do not allow them to speak their native language for fear of discrimination.

Movement into the White-identification stage is caused by the awareness that Asian Americans are different from their peers. Kim (2001) offered an explanation of how this stage is influenced by Asian cultural values:
Given the Asian cultural values of quiet suffering and avoiding public shame, most Asian parents are not able to help their children other than telling them to ignore these slights and hurts. … The Asian cultural tendency toward group or collective orientation has taught them to attend to the reactions of others in their social circle and to try to fit in rather than stick out. In addition to group orientation, the significance of shame in Asian cultures may influence Asian Americans to try at all costs to fit into White society in order to avoid publicly embarrassing themselves. (pp. 73–74)

Awakening to social and political consciousness in the next stage, Asian Americans begin to realize they are not personally responsible for their experiences with racism. Usually, there is an impetus for movement into this phase, such as a personal experience with racism. One major construct of this phase is a reaction against White people, or in the very least, seeing White people as those they do not want to be like (Kim, 2001, p. 77).

Identification with Asian Americans is a key component of the fourth stage, with redirection to an Asian American consciousness. With support and encouragement from friends, Asian Americans begin to feel secure enough in themselves to see their own experiences as valid. A critical step taken by Asian Americans during this stage is immersion in the Asian American experience (Kim, 2001, p. 79).

The key factor in Stage 5, incorporation, is confidence in one’s own Asian American identity. “This confidence allows Asian Americans to relate to many different groups of people without losing their own identity as Asian American” (Kim, 2001, p. 80). For Asian Americans, however, this stage is muddled by intergroup differences in the Asian American cultural community. Asian American students may have confidence in some facets of their racial Asian American identity, but little confidence in their specific ethnic identity, such as being a Chinese American.
Empirical Studies

Yeh and Wang (2000) studied the coping strategies of Asian American students. Coping strategies are the “beliefs, attitudes and feelings associating with various strategies of managing mental health concerns” (p. 94). The researchers argued that theories of help-seeking preferences for this population must include indigenous patterns of coping. These patterns include placing importance on relationships and familial commitments and not seeking professional counselors because of the stigma associated with emotional expression and mental illness. Another pattern is to hide personal problems and put the needs of the group ahead of the individual, also known as “collective action” (Rhoads et al., 2002). Yet another characteristic is a strong interdependent emphasis in Asian culture (Yeh & Wang, 2000, p. 99). Finally, self-disclosure is culturally dissonant with Asian values of self-restraint (Yeh & Wang, 2000, p. 101).

Researchers have found that Asian Americans were most likely to seek help from friends, family members, significant others, church members, and student organizations, rather than professional counselors (Yeh & Wang, 2000, p. 98). Furthermore, women had more open attitudes toward counseling than men. The researchers suggested that university counselors perform outreach to familial, church, and student organizations to expand their base of strategies for working with Asian American college students.

Rhoads et al. (2002) studied collective action among Asian American college students. According to the researchers, Asian Americans now account for more than 6% of the overall student enrollment in the United States (p. 876). Because of this increase in representation, there is a need to better understand their experiences and how pan ethnicity and organizing contribute to their development. Asian American students have faced persistent racism at the university level, including being perceived as problem-free and not well-rounded, and being turned away due to unfair admission policies (Rhoads et al., 2002, p. 877). As Omatsu (1994) noted, the model-minority myth pits Asian Americans against African Americans and other minori-
ties and serves to mask the barriers they face (as cited in Rhoads et al., 2002, p. 877). Asian American students face stereotypes linked to overachieving, having strong mathematics and science skills, and leading antisocial lives (Rhoads et al., 2002, p. 883). Women face the additional stereotypes of being labeled exotic or hypersexual. Pan ethnic identity development can help students combat these issues, and, in areas where there are not significant numbers, can serve as a cultural bridge among different members of this large and diverse population.

Authors have defined Asian American pan ethnic identity as “a collective identity organized around broad commonalities rooted in a variety of particular ethnicities traceable to points in Asia (i.e., Chinese American, Japanese American, Indian American, Taiwanese American, Vietnamese American, etc.)” (Rhoads et al., 2002, p. 877). Researchers have found that involvement in ethnic student organizations promotes this sense of identity. Furthermore, “identification with ethnic or racial identity contributes positively to the construction of diverse cultural settings in which democratic forms of higher education are most likely to take root” (Rhoads et al., 2002, p. 878). Involvement in these organizations also provides members with developmental advantages over those who are not involved. University administrators should support multicultural student centers, ethnic student organizations, and activities that promote social interaction within the Asian American community (Rhoads et al., 2002, p. 887). They should also use more precise ethnic categories on their admission forms, which will help to identify the specific ethnic background of students. In doing so, universities can help support collective action among Asian American students as a method of empowerment and strategy to combat discrimination.

Inkelas (2003) conducted a study on Asian Americans’ perspectives on affirmative action using Blumer’s group position theory as a theoretical framework. Inkelas claimed that affirmative action influences how individuals view others from different racial groups, but also these views can become internalized by the recipients of
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the generalizations (p. 625). The students in the study felt that Asian American college applicants, on the whole, were more qualified than other applicants. “These students tended to partly subscribe to the belief that Asian Pacific Americans (APA) are academically superior in some respects” (Inkelas, 2003, p. 632). This belief suggests these students have internalized the myth of the model minority. Inkelas also found that responses of peers were equally influential to factual information when forming opinions about other races. This finding supports the construct that the peer group in Asian American communities is of critical importance.

Asian American students’ perspectives on affirmative-action policies vary. According to Bobo (1999), more oppressed groups are more likely to perceive other racial groups as threats (as cited in Inkelas, 2004, p. 629). Students in Inkelas’ study were not necessarily threatened by affirmative action, but did express frustration because Asian Americans usually do not benefit from such policies because they are not generally considered to be underrepresented in higher education and, therefore, are ineligible under affirmative action policies. Inkelas also noted that “the lack of knowledge about MA history tends to cause [students] to marginalize themselves and their group’s role in the fight for racial equity and justice in the U.S.” (Inkelas, 2004, p. 639).

In a follow-up study, Inkelas (2004) investigated how ethnic cocurricular activities facilitate a sense of ethnic awareness and understanding among APA undergraduate students. Inkelas found that participation in these clubs deepen Asian American students’ commitments to their racial community and supports their racial-identity development. In APA families, “parents’ backgrounds have a considerable impact on APA students’ sense of cultural emphasis and commitment” (Inkelas, 2004, p. 287). This concept includes parental education and professional attainment. Inkelas found that “peer influences and cocurricular activities have also been associated with students’ heightened sense of intercultural understanding” (Inkelas, 2004, p. 288). MA students’ perceptions about campus climate have
an effect on their attitudes about race and ethnicity. Participation in universitywide diversity activities and community service can help promote a positive racial climate.

Samuel (2004) studied the impact of racism in peer-group interactions among south Asian students at a Canadian university and found that Asian Americans face more racism than their White counterparts, which negatively impacts their academic performance. Essed (1991) noted that racism is “a system of structural inequalities and a historical process both created and recreated through routine practices” (as cited in Samuel, 2004, p. 409). According to Feagin et al. (1996), “overt racism is associated with enhanced feelings of isolation, alienation, segregation and concomitant stress” (as cited in Samuel, 2004, p. 407). All 40 respondents in Samuel’s study claimed they had experienced racism.

Many first-generation respondents expressed doubts about their status and abilities based on English-language proficiency, cultural differences, accent, and gender (Samuel, 2004, p. 412). Ridiculing comments by faculty and peers, along with being the only minority in a group, exacerbated these feelings. One female respondent felt she had to do better than others and continually prove herself because she was a woman. Due to not speaking a great deal in class, the student felt that her grades were negatively affected. The student expressed frustration because she was socialized differently—to be more nonverbal and quiet than her White peers. Another female expressed frustration because of covert racism, defined as White students and faculty behaving “in an aloof detached, and unfriendly manner towards minority students” (Samuel, 2004, p. 415). Some women felt discouraged because they constantly had to “represent” people of color and share their perspectives in class. In this context, they constantly had to explain why south Asian girls do not date as frequently or engage in the other activities in which their White peers engage (Samuel, 2004, p. 418).

Salter (2003) examined factors that encourage classroom participation. The “chilly classroom” concept is used to explain when women
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experience the classroom as unsupportive, which impacts their academic performance (Salter, 2003, p. 110). “Female students employ learning strategies that are inconsistent with a historical, male-oriented approach to teaching” (Salter & Persaud, 2003, p. 111). Based on Jung’s (1921, 1971) theory of psychological types, many women are of the thinking–feeling type, which would be a better fit in classrooms that are warm, involving, discussion oriented, and group based (Salter & Persaud, 2003, p. 112). Persaud (1999) found that female students participated more in feeling-oriented classrooms (as cited in Salter & Persaud, 2003, p. 113). In fact, extraverted classrooms tend to be a better fit for both introverted and extraverted women.

Salter and Persaud (2003) studied classroom participation and campus “fit” among college women. Among those who scored as “thinking” on the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator scale (Myers et al., 1998), only 31% were women (as cited in Salter & Persaud, 2003, p. 832). This study found that “feeling” women reported lack of participation in “thinking” classrooms. Given that most university classrooms are based on a historical, male-oriented approach (i.e., “thinking” approach), it can be concluded that women do not participate as much in class as their male counterparts. The main reason that women in this study claimed they did not participate was fear of being criticized by their professors and peers, fear of failure, and fear of disrespect.

Implications for Practice

The U.S. college population is becoming more ethnically and culturally diverse, a trend projected to continue over the next several years. As more students of color populate college campuses, it is important for college administrators to have a solid foundation in these students’ background, enabling them to provide appropriate services and activities. A population that deserves considerable attention is the Asian American community. In this community, however, there is an invisible component that has yet to be fully examined in relation to existing theory and research: female Asian American college students’ development and practices that lead to their success.
**Theory**

Considerable research has been conducted with college students, and theories about their development have been formulated, such as Chickering’s (1969) seven vectors of development. Research on female college students has also been explored (Gilligan, 1982), as has research on Asian American identity development (Kim, 2001). In addition, empirical studies have been considered that illustrate how women’s experiences in college differ from those of their male counterparts. Despite considerable research, however, a formal theory about female Asian American college students has yet to be developed. A synthesis of these works may help guide future researchers to develop a formalized theory about the development of female Asian American college students.

Chickering’s (1969) vectors of developing competence and moving through autonomy toward interdependence are common among college students. Gilligan (1982) noted, however, that women differ in that they develop competence and autonomy through collaborative effort, due to their ethic of care for others. Kim (2001) and others helped frame these vectors in the context of the Asian American community. Because of Asian American values of collective action and group orientation, female Asian American students may elevate the importance of interdependence in contrast to complete autonomy.

Chickering (1969) noted that the first three vectors usually occur simultaneously, but are completed before the remaining four vectors begin. Clearly the Asian American community experiences these vectors differently. Managing emotions, for example, may be much more difficult for female Asian American students because they face discrimination and experience the classroom as a chilly climate. If they struggle in this second vector, it seems logical that this would prevent them from moving on to higher levels of development. They may be more advanced, however, in developing mature relationships because of their collective orientation (Kim, 2001) and what Gilligan (1982) identifies as a woman’s judgment of themselves as caring individuals (p. 17).
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Chickering’s (1969) central vector of development is developing identity. Kim (2001) illustrated that racism and stereotypes hinder identity development among Asian American students because they see themselves as inferior. It can be concluded, then, that Asian American female students take longer to develop identity, and may never fully develop a separate identity outside of their referent groups—family and peers. Establishing identity also has to do with developing confidence in oneself. Kim noted that often Asian American students in the White-identification stage have low self-esteem and even self-hatred, which conflicts with having confidence.

Developing mature interpersonal relationships is a higher level vector. It seems that Asian American students develop these relationships in college, but they are more common in their cultural group because of shared experiences. Researchers have noted that participation in ethnic student organizations promotes these relationships. Kim (2001) also noted that in one stage of development, Asian American students refer to Whites as the antireferent group.

Chickering’s (1969) last two vectors are developing purpose and developing integrity. These stages are related to Kim’s (2001) incorporation stage, in which Asian Americans are able to appreciate the difference in others, while maintaining their sense of self. For women, these ideals are most closely related to Gilligan’s (1982) language of responsibility, which involves accountability to oneself and responsibility for others. Asian American students may develop more quickly through these stages because they are forced to have a strong sense of purpose, due to unfair practices in college, the chilly climate for women, and discrimination. These factors lead them to develop integrity, because they are successful despite these obstacles.

Training

Training programs for college administrators vary in scope, but most programs have only one course that focuses on issues of multiculturalism. The literature in this area is markedly lacking as it relates to female Asian American college students. Students in higher education graduate programs should be encouraged to explore
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this area of study. Current professionals at institutions with high concentrations of Asian American students should be encouraged to conduct research in this area as well. This type of research can be a very effective training tool.

Faculty need to be trained on the learning styles that students bring to the classroom. Notably they should know that a majority of women are thinking–feeling learners. The curriculum and classroom structure should be adjusted to equalize classroom participation among men and women. It is even more challenging for female Asian American students to participate due to Asian cultural values. It is difficult for them to speak out about the classroom injustices they face because of their collective orientation and concern for the group rather than the individual. Faculty who teach history courses on civil rights need to include how Asian Americans struggle in classes that are not oriented toward thinking–feeling learners. Faculty should use diverse teaching and grading techniques to provide more opportunities for female Asian Americans who may not perform well in existing classroom structures.

Activities and Support

Because students’ racial attitudes are influenced by interaction with peers, peer trainers should be used to help educate the student body about multicultural issues. Asian American students’ perceptions about racial harmony and campus fit are influenced by the efforts the university makes to talk openly about these issues. Therefore, administrators need to include conversations about race and ethnicity during key programs such as orientation, freshman seminars, general education classes, the president’s address, and graduation. Being clear about admissions and affirmative-action policies would help prevent assumptions about the qualifications of minority students. Similarly, admitting a diverse student population would relieve the burden of Asian American students feeling as though they are the “token” student and expert on all aspects of Asian American matters.

Programs should be developed that celebrate the history, traditions, and contributions of all groups, including Asian Americans. Because
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the classroom environment is sometimes “chilly” to women, especially Asian American women, administrators need to continue to augment the cocurricular experience with relevant programs and support for organizations. Support, financial and spacial, should be given to ethnic-student organizations because these groups have been shown to promote identity development among Asian American students. Students should be encouraged to participate in these groups as well.

Conclusion
Research on female Asian American college students is important for those who consider themselves allies of this population and all students of color. Faculty and staff may experience challenges in working with this population because they do not fit into a traditional developmental model. Critical pedagogues should strategize ways to work with and view students as individual beings who have shared developmental experiences with many populations: men, women, Asian Americans, minorities, internationals, nationals. They weave their own framework in the complexities of being all at once and yet themselves. Because they are multidimensional, so too must be the methods of understanding and helping promote the success of female Asian American college students.
References


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