4
Asian Pacific American Cultural Capital: Understanding Diverse Parents and Students

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The purpose of this chapter is to provide an informed discussion regarding the cultural values that shape the behaviors and achievement of Asian Pacific American (APA) students. Bronfenbrenner's (1979, 1986) ecological model of human development is used to explain how many APA families encourage and reinforce educational achievement. A central idea in this chapter is "cultural capital," which refers to the attitudes, expectations, knowledge, and behaviors parents pass on to their children that assist them in succeeding in school and society. To illustrate this central premise, the chapter also employs Sue and Okazaki's (1990) concept of relative functionalism as a key element in Asian cultural capital as it relates to both educational achievement and upward mobility. In addition, the chapter discusses the experiences and educational needs of diverse APA groups (e.g., Chinese, Filipino, Hmong, Japanese, Korean, Lao, Vietnamese, etc.). Though their educational needs may be similar, their social and academic experiences may differ due to various elements such as history and generational levels in the US. The chapter concludes with recommendations for educators to encourage and collaborate with Asian American students and their families.

4.1. Asian Pacific American Diversity

Asians generally share similar cultural values. For example, researchers find that many APA parents and their children have high regard for education. Nonetheless, their views and behavior may differ depending on ethnic group membership, socio-economic class, generation in the United States, assimilation levels, and other factors (Agbayani-Siewert, 1994; Benham & Heck, 1998; Chang, 2003; Cordova, 1983; Goyette & Xie, 1999; Heras & Patacsil, 2001; Hirschman & Wong, 1986; Kao & Tienda, 1998; Kiang & Lee 1993; Kim, 1980; Kim, 2002; Kitano & DiJiosia, 2002; Lee, 1996; Nordoff, 1985; Pang, 1990;

Rumbaut, 1997; Slaughter-Defoe et al., 1990; Sue & Sue, 1973; Tanabe & Rochon, in press; Uba, 1994). The discussion in this chapter indicates that APA parents employ differing methods to encourage educational success in their children. For this reason, some APA families and groups may be more successful in schools than others as illustrated in this chapter.

Researchers also find that APA youth are in need of educational services that are not being provided in schools (Benham & Heck, 1998; Flores, 1998; Rumbaut, 1997). Unfortunately, educators operate as if the "model minority" myth, a belief that all APA students are high achievers, is true (Hune & Chan, 1997). Zhou (Ch. 7, this volume) and Lee (Ch. 10, this volume) discuss this myth in proceeding chapters of this book. An overgeneralized view of Asian Pacific Americans is a powerful force in society. This viewpoint arises from the belief that "Asians" are a homogeneous group of model minority students. When data are gathered in school districts and aggregated into broad categories such as APA, research on academic achievement seems to indicate high levels of scholarship and thus the label, "whiz kids" has been used to describe many APAs.

Unfortunately, this portrayal does not accurately reflect the performance of individuals and particular ethnic groups. Some research suggests that Samoan Americans, Cambodian Americans, Native Hawaiians, and Lao Americans have not, as separate groups, been highly successful in schools (Lee, 1996; Long, 1996; Pang, 1990; Kiang, 2002; Reeves & Bennett, 2003). The academic achievement profiles of various APA groups differ and disaggregated statistical information can assist researchers in better understanding the specific needs of APA ethnic groups (Hune & Chan, 1997; Nordoff, 1985; Pang, Kiang, Pak, & 2004).

4.2. Asian Pacific Americans

Presently, there are approximately 12 million Asian Pacific Americans, and they have increased by 72.2 percent since 1990 (Youngberg, 2001). The U.S. Census Bureau predicts that the APA population will increase to 33.5 million by 2050 (Committee of 100, 2005). APAs encompass a number of highly diverse ethnic groups, including those of Cambodian, Chinese, East Indian, Filipino, Guamanian, Hawaiian, Hmong, Indonesian, Japanese, Korean, Laotian, Samoan, Thai, Tibetan, and Vietnamese cultural heritages. The U.S. Bureau of the Census also included the following groups within the category of all other Asians in the 1980 Census (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1983): Bangladeshi, Bhutanese, Bornean, Burmese, Celbesian, Cernan, Indochinese, Iwo-Jiman, Javanese, Malayan, Maldivian, Nepali, Okinawan, Sikkimese, Singaporean, and Sri Lankan (Gardner & Smith, 1985). In total, APAs are one of the fastest-growing minority groups in the United States. From 1970 to 1980 the APA population increased by approximately 143% (Suzuki, 1988). And from 1980 to 1990 the APA population continued to grow, numbering 7.3 million people and representing almost 3% of the U.S. population in 1990 (Ong & Hee, 1993).

The APA student population has also seen dramatic growth. During the 1980s, the number of Asian and Pacific Islander American children increased from a little over 900,000 to 1.7 million (Kiang & Lee, 1993). In states like California, New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania, the number of APA school-age students grew during this decade at a rate of over 100%. Various factors account for the explosive population increase. For example, the numbers of Korean immigrant children have grown because of the expansion in adoption of youth by U.S. families (Chan, 1991). In addition, the number of immigrants from Southeast Asia increased as a result of the Vietnam War. Kiang and Lee (1993) reported that one district in Massachusetts saw the addition of 35 to 50 new Cambodian and Laotian students registering for school each week in 1987. Taking into consideration birthrate and continued immigration, it is projected that the APA student population will continue to increase.

Since the APA community is complex and includes many ethnic groups, it is important to identify the terms utilized in this chapter. The terminology and definitions adopted for this piece were taken from a document written by the Committee of 100, a non-partisan Chinese American leadership organization (Committee of 100, 2005, p. 16):

- *Asians* are persons who have origins in peoples of the Far East (Chinese, Filipino, Japanese, Korean), Southeast Asia or the Indian subcontinent.
- *Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders* are persons who have origins in peoples of Hawaii, Guam, Samoa, Palau, Micronesia, Mariana Islands, or other Pacific Islands.
- *Southeast Asian* generally refers to Burmese, Cambodian, Hmong, Laotian, Thai, and Vietnamese.
- *South Asian* generally refers to Asian Indian, Bangladeshi, Bhutanese, Nepalese, Pakistani, Tibetan, and Sri Lankan.

These terms and their definitions demonstrate the diversity found within the APA community. Though many individuals think of Asian Pacific Americans as a homogenous group, the listing above shows the extensive within group diversity.

4.3. Ecology of Human Development

The interactions of APA parents and their children within their ethnic communities and in general society can be explained by using Bronfenbrenner's (1979, 1986) ecology of human development. Bronfenbrenner identified five environmental systems to explain a range of contexts and factors that contribute to maturation. Since the first four are most pertinent to the experiences of APA children in this chapter, they will be the focus of the discussion. These four ecological systems can be used to explain the complexities involved in how APA parents impart educational values and guide the academic development of

their children. In each environmental system, the child is placed at its center and linkages are shown to influence the life of the person. Though more detailed illustrations are given in a subsequent section, here is a summary of these four systems:

1) *Microsystem* – daily interactions with family members, peers, and teachers;
2) *Mesosystem* – influence of the connections of various microsystems. For example, parents who have positive relationships with teachers may be helpful in the child's learning process;
3) *Exosystem* – the influence of other settings that are further removed from a child. For example, state curriculum standards may indirectly shape his/her schooling experiences; and
4) *Macrosystem* – the socio-cultural values of society that influence the development of a child. For example, the lack of APA role models found in mainstream culture may negatively impact the ethnic identity formation of a young person.

Though Bronfenbrenner has identified family relationships as a fundamental ecology in the development of children, he also believed in the importance of other ecological systems that interact with the family system. In his theoretical framework, people are seen as individuals who interact within a range of social contexts. Individuals also have diverse characteristics that include ethnicity, age, immigration history, generation in the United States, gender, religious affiliations, interests, and talents that shape their experiences. For example, APA parents may be first generation immigrants who hold strong traditional cultural values, such as respect for elders and high regard for education. Since many children go to school with these values, students not only assimilate into the school culture, their ethnic beliefs about education become more connected to expected achievement behaviors and norms of society. In addition, their ethnic identity may be generally positive due to ethnic group experiences, such as participation in after-school Chinese school and ethnic churches, which oftentimes reinforce these values. Parents may also engage children in discussions regarding the importance of college and these discussions over time provide a strong educational orientation. Therefore, as children mature, they develop their own systems of beliefs. The examples above indicate how the cultural capital that many Asian Pacific American students may bring to schools work well with mainstream educational expectations.

Bronfenbrenner's ecological system of human development is a multi-layered theory and supports data from different disciplines such as anthropology, sociology, and psychology. The theory explains how an individual interacts in various contexts and through these interactions children develop and mature. In addition, since environments are dynamic and always changing, shifting social influences shape individual development over time. It is important to note that the following section includes studies as examples in understanding the complexities of APA cultures and development. Many of the selected studies were large-scale

research projects that encompassed several groups. Other studies are representative of certain APA groups. Due to the limits of this chapter, it was impossible to represent all APA groups equally and should be interpreted carefully. However, since many APAs do share some similar experiences and hold the family as a central unit, this chapter highlights the importance of cultural capital through Bronfenbrenner's model.

4.4. The Four Ecological Environments and Their Impact on Human Development

The first context that a child finds him/herself in is the *microsystem*. Within this context, the child interacts with and responds to parents, siblings, extended family members, neighbors, and peers. In this ecological paradigm, the child interacts with others and constructs meaning that arises out of life experiences. The interactions are reciprocal rather than passive. At this level, much time is spent with parents and other family members. Since the family is the most important structure in the transmission of cultural values (Sata, 1983), particularly for an APA family, it is essential to provide examples of parent-children interactions. The examples discussed below indicate that though parents may value education and are communicating with their children, parent-child interaction patterns may slightly differ in the APA community depending on factors such as generation in the United States, immigrant status, and ethnic membership.

Research indicates that APA parents are often involved in the education of their children through childrearing practices. One important study conducted by Cabezas (1981) examined the early childhood development of 233 Asian American families (Chinese, Japanese, Korean, and Vietnamese) from the San Francisco-Oakland metropolitan area. He researched parental values and communication styles. The author found in his sample that Asian American mothers, both native born and immigrant, tended to use question-asking behaviors rather than modeling, cueing or direct commands. Native-born Asian American mothers used more question behaviors than others. The Chinese and Filipino mothers who were born overseas used more direct commands and held more authoritarian beliefs than other mothers. In the families where mothers asked more questions, the children (preschool and primary grades) also responded with more questions and sought more verbal approval from their mothers. Other studies, such as the research conducted by Chao (2001) found that Chinese American parents were more authoritarian based on cultural values. In general, researchers have found that authoritarian parenting appears to be effective with Asian students and encourages them to do well in school, however, as noted earlier, generation, ethnic group, and assimilation levels should be considered.

Another study looked at the parent-children relationships of Southeast Asian American refugees. Rumbaut and Ima, (1988) in San Diego collected extensive data on 579 youth, while general comparative information was collected on 1485 junior and senior high students. Vietnamese, Chinese Vietnamese, and Hmong

parents stressed and pressured students to achieve more than Lao and Khmer parents. Rumbaut and Ima hypothesized that Vietnamese, Chinese Vietnamese, and Hmong parents exercised stronger parental control over their children. Vietnamese American students were more likely to feel familial obligation and to be competitive in school since parents stressed the critical nature of collective survival. It was important that all members of the family including children contribute to the status and future of the family (Rumbaut & Ima, 1988). In contrast, the Lao and Khmer samples were from more rural areas and were less educated. These parents valued a more individualist orientation and encouraged their children to move out of the house sooner, therefore these children did not hold the same achievement responsibilities to the family. Though the levels of parental styles and expectations varied, along with socio-economic status, parents generally encouraged academic success.

As children mature, Bronfenbrenner's ecology of human development expands to include linkages between several microsystems to form a *mesosystem*. In this level, microsystems, may conflict or reinforce each other. In some cases on a micro level as seen through the earlier examples, Asian Pacific American parents have taught their children to value education, which is reinforced by the ethnic culture. These two microsystems work together to form a belief system that supports academic achievement. The child internalizes the importance of education and is motivated to bring honor to the family and community; this creates a "culturally compatible" orientation (Slaughter-Defoe et al., 1990). The two microsystems demonstrate cultural continuity in the immigrant subculture of the APA families to values found in mainstream schools (Kao, 2004; Kim 1980). The two systems are working collaboratively to reinforce the importance of academic achievement.

This cultural orientation can also be seen in the research of Kao (2004). Kao studied parent-child relationships using the National Education Longitudinal Study of 1988. Asian American and Hispanic eighth graders and their parents were first sampled in 1988 and then additional data was gathered every two years through 1994. Kao's (2004) study reported data from students in the tenth and twelfth grades. Results showed that Asian American immigrant parents exercised more decision-making over their first generation Asian children than the parents of third generation Asian peers. Therefore, the parent-child relationships of immigrant parents were much more authoritarian, a relationship that is more strict and did not allow children as much independence (Kao, 2004).

Like the study by Rumbaut and Ima, Kao found students who held strong traditional cultural values towards education and had solid relationships with parents, were more likely to be successful in school. In addition, Kao found that first and second generation Asian parents talked with their children about college and the importance of studying for standardized tests such as the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT). Kao hypothesized that Asian American students of immigrant parents were more likely to feel obligation towards their family and internalize their parents' high academic expectations. This example illustrates how two systems worked closely together to encourage academic achievement: one was

the parenting style of immigrant parents and the second was the cultural value belief system of parents.

Research has also been conducted on other APA youth populations. Lee (1996) studied Hmong high school students and found that "1.5 generation" (those who were born in the home country but who came to the US as children), "second generation" (those born in the US to immigrant parents), and "third generation" (those who were born to second generation parents) have taken on various identities. Some youth are more traditional in their identity and others who are successful in school believe educational success will lead to career success, while others do not believe that schooling experiences will lead to increased mobility in society. Other researchers have also found that some second generation Hmong youth had serious conflicts with parents, schooling, and did not feel accepted in mainstream society. A number of these young people became involved in Asian gangs or dropped out of school (Rumbaut & Ima, 1988).

In a follow-up study of Hmong high school students, Lee (2001) found that though many Hmong youth faced influential forces of assimilation, they were still connected to issues of cultural identity, generation, age, and marital status. In fact, some were unusually protective of their cultural background (Lee, 2001). Her research demonstrated how different microsystems come into contact with each other and influence the development of APA youth. Though schools are strong institutions of cultural assimilation, parents and students are working toward finding ways to develop a bicultural orientation. Unfortunately, some teachers operate on the overgeneralized stereotype of the model minority and do not understand that culture is important to many of their Hmong students no matter what generation they represent. Lee (2001) found many Hmong students to have created a dynamic balance between traditional and mainstream US cultures. They value their home cultures, but clearly do not feel accepted by the majority of other students or school faculty.

Exosystem is an ecological environment in which individuals have no power to change or influence the embedded system. Numerous examples show how APA members are affected by school personnel and others. The following discussion on Filipino American parents and children is one example of being part of an environmental context that they did not choose.

The cultural background of Filipino Americans includes the values, history, and cultural behaviors of colonial countries that dominated the Philippines for numerous years. The Philippines was a Spanish colony for more than 350 years from 1521 until 1898. Later the country was controlled by the United States after the US defeated Spain in the Spanish American War (Flores, 1998). As a case study of colonialism, Santos (1983) and Cordova (1983) believed that the domination of these countries created a colonial mindset in many Filipinos and Filipino Americans. A colonial mindset may be an obstacle to feeling full inclusion in society and can impact the success of parents and their children in society (Santos, 1983). Filipinos, however, came to the United States with many cultural assets. Most Filipinos know English and they have been raised in cultural traditions that are similar to those in the United States. For example, many

Filipino immigrants are Christian or Catholic and have attended school systems that were modeled after those in the U.S. Education is an important value in the family and parents work hard to ensure that their children have educational opportunities (Cordova, 1983; Agbayani-Siewert, 1994; Santos, 1983). Children are expected to do well in school. Filipino American parents and children may hold many values and language skills that are culturally compatible with mainstream society (Agbayani-Siewert, 2004), however, it is important to understand the history and background of their experiences.

Macrosystem is an extensive ecological context that includes the general society. Though the child is at the center of the circle, his/her experiences are now influenced by other powerful systems such as mainstream society and global issues. Therefore, the individual encounters more value orientations, perspectives, and ways of being that may support or conflict with his/her socio-cultural expectations. In the macrosystem, APA youth may encounter a variety of these experiences. One powerful force is cultural assimilation and even racism in their maturation process (Pang, 2006). Cultural assimilation is the process in which an individual takes on the culture of the host community and removes aspects of the home and ethnic cultures such as language, behaviors, and attitudes.

As part of the developmental process, APA youth develop an identity, who they are, what they think is important, and where they belong. This can be a difficult process when they encounter consistent messages that they do not belong in US society. APA parents and youth often encounter comments and other forms of prejudice that convey the message that they are foreigners and not Americans (Agbayani-Siewert, 1994; Benham & Heck, 1998; Chang, 2003; Cordova, 1983; Flores, 1998; Hune & Chan, 1997; Kiang, 2002; Louie, 2004; Pang, 2006). In addition, young people face powerful forces of cultural assimilation where they receive continual messages that to be an "American" means the giving up of home languages, cultural behaviors, and cultural values that may differ from the mainstream. As a member of at least two cultural communities, Asian or Pacific Islander and mainstream, the process of identity development can be extremely confusing.

Sue and Okazaki (1990) posed a pragmatic construct of relative functionalism in understanding cultural capital. Since they believe that Asian Pacific Americans have experienced extensive societal oppression, the researchers theorized that many APAs perceive education as one of the few avenues that they can utilize to become successful. Therefore, Sue and Okazaki believe parents teach their children in covert and overt ways to work harder in order to succeed in schools and in society to fight racism. This pragmatic approach was also proposed by Suzuki (1977), who argued that APAs, such as Chinese Americans, Japanese Americans, and Korean Americans pursued education, because of the discrimination they faced in employment. Suzuki believed that some Asian Americans felt that schooling and earning advanced degrees would provide their children with upward mobility. In addition, many Asian Americans believed in a type of meritocracy. Though they may not be able to rise to the same socio-economic

level of mainstream Americans with the same degree of accomplishments, they believed education was their most promising pathway for career advancement.

Historically, there are many examples where legalized and covert oppression has shaped the lives of Asian Pacific Americans. For example, in Hawaii, there are many instances that can be identified. To begin with, Hawaiians have had their lands taken from them and were politically marginalized with little voice in the Hawaiian government until recent times. In addition, many Hawaiians have suffered from unemployment, lack of housing, and poor health. Examples can also be found in schools. In 1994, native Hawaiian youth made up 23 percent of the student population in Hawaii, but comprised 33 percent of special education students (Benham & Heck 1998). However, Hawaiian Americans have become politically active and are working towards preserving their cultural heritage. Through this self-empowerment movement, Hawaiians are encouraging their children to go to college and attend high achieving schools. Parents and the community want their young people to be academically successful. One of the most powerful organizations in Hawaii is the Bishop Estate. This institution supports Kamehameha Schools originally founded by Princess Bernice Pau'ahi Bishop to ensure the education of Hawaiian children. In order to attend these schools, children must be part Hawaiian.

Cultural and economic oppression are extremely powerful forces. Initially, Hawaii was one of the most literate communities in the world, however, this changed when non-Hawaiians took control of the islands and forced Hawaiians to eliminate their language and cultural ways of living. However, after statehood was achieved, the revival of community and culture began to take hold. Unfortunately, due to historical racism, one of the major issues for Native Hawaiians is literacy. In 1991, a report issued by the Bishop Estate noted that about one third of Native Hawaiians were functionally illiterate (Benham & Heck, 1998). Scholars believe that severe cultural and political issues act as obstacles to the education of Native Hawaiians. For example, many Native Hawaiian children come to school speaking Hawaiian Creole English. This dialect is an integral aspect of Hawaiian identity and culture (Au & Jordan, 1977; Benham & Heck, 1998).

Students, however, are often criticized and penalized for use of the home dialect and told to speak Standard English. This cultural conflict can result in students retreating from their studies or ignoring their teachers. Culturally relevant teaching has been found to be an excellent approach for teachers to use with Hawaiian students (Au & Jordan, 1977). In this way both the content and context of the students' cultures are integrated into the curriculum and instruction of the classroom (Pang, 2005). Today, in some schools, such as the Kamehameha Schools, Hawaiian history, culture, and language are integrated into the instructional curriculum along with communication styles that are familiar to children (Benham & Heck, 1998; Au & Jordan, 1977). These strategies have been implemented and used to form the foundation of educational reform at the Kamehameha Schools. Parents and community leaders believe that the Hawaiian culture must be protected, integrated, and honored in schools so that children develop a strong sense of who they are. Though macrosystems that

include racism and social oppression have discouraged the development of educational opportunities for Hawaiians, parents, students, community leaders, and educators have worked together to provide educational opportunities for students.

In this level of macrosystems, the socialization of Korean American children was effected by racism. Kim (1980) studied a total of 408 Korean American parents and elementary age children who lived in Chicago and Los Angeles. The researcher collected data through interviews and questionnaires. Parents believed strongly in education and had high expectations for their children; they wanted them to be successful in schools and later in their careers. Kim found that approximately three-quarters of mothers worked outside of the home. Within this sample, approximately 30 percent of parents and children in Chicago identified instances of discrimination at school. They reported that children experienced name-calling, being picked on, or were bullied. Parents also described their own personal problems with discrimination. The adults were frustrated with their ability to advance in society because of their Korean ancestry and language limitations. Approximately two-thirds of the Chicago sample, both mothers and fathers, were working in skilled, semi-skilled, unskilled, or had no position outside of the home. Few were professionals, managers, or business owners. Many parents felt that prejudice was an element in their inability to advance. Therefore, parents taught their children to be high achievers in school, and emphasized that they were to learn English well so they could assimilate quickly into school culture.

Parents in the Los Angeles sample reported that about 42 percent of the men and 32 percent of the women were professionals, managers, clerks or business owners. Many had discussed a downward trend in their careers when they migrated to the United States. Many subjects indicated a need for English fluency and this might also add to their inability to secure a position that was equal to their educational accomplishments. Parental attitudes conveyed to children were also studied regarding career aspirations. Korean American children in the Los Angeles sample reported that their parents had high levels of career aspirations for them. For example, 35.5 percent of the children who lived in Los Angeles reported that their parents wanted them to be doctors or lawyers and 7.6 percent felt their parents wanted them to be scientists. These numbers are quite different from a reported 3 percent of the sample indicating that the child thought their parents wanted him/her to be a politician.

Kim, however, also found parents held conflicting beliefs. They wanted their children to do well in mainstream schools and to learn mainstream ways, but they also did not want their children to lose the ability to speak Korean or give up their cultural values. Like Sue and Okazaki, this study indicates that parents are well aware of societal prejudice and believe that children must work hard in order to combat obstacles of racism that they will encounter by achieving in school.

As with other Asian Pacific American communities, Japanese Americans value family and education (De Vos, 1973; Kitano, 1976). However, the macrosystem

has been extremely powerful in the rapid cultural assimilation process of Japanese Americans. This is largely due to their historical experiences with institutional and societal racism in the United States during the first half of the Twentieth Century. Historically, their experience has been somewhat different than more recent Asian immigrant groups. Chinese immigrants were the first ethnic group to be denied entry into the United States by name with the passage of the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882. Racism against Asian Americans continued. During World War II, 120,000 Japanese Americans, two-thirds of whom were US born citizens, were incarcerated by their own government after the bombing of Pearl Harbor. These citizens were perceived as foreigners and traitors.

Because of racism, evidenced by their removal, many lost their homes, farms, businesses, possessions, and sense of self. In addition after the war when they returned to birthplaces such as Seattle, San Francisco, and Portland, they were labeled, humiliated, excluded, and discriminated against in housing, employment, and in schools. Japanese Americans felt their honor and pride had been damaged and wanted to demonstrate their loyalty to mainstream society. Since most of the Japanese at that time held a belief system that was founded on the traditional values of Meiji Japan, they valued community, honor, and education. This also included sensitivity to others and a need to belong to a collective, therefore they were more vulnerable to criticism of others (Kitano, 1976; Sata, 1983; Yamamoto & Iga, 1983).

Due to the extreme racism that Japanese American parents and their children experienced during World War II, outward cultural customs and artifacts were not encouraged. So many third generation and beyond youth were never taught to speak Japanese at home. Parents did not want their children to experience the humiliation and prejudice that they felt, so many parents wanted their children to grow up being "two hundred percent" American (Kitano, 1976). The process of cultural assimilation of Japanese Americans has been one of the most comprehensive in APA ethnic groups. In addition, since the immigration of Japanese Americans was halted in 1924 with the Asian Exclusion Act, the Japanese American community became isolated and tight knit.

These forces contributed to what Sue and Okazaki identified as relative functionalism. Japanese American parents believed that their children had to work hard and to excel in school. Education was one of the few ways that their children could access economic mobility especially in a country that touted the principle of equal educational opportunity. Many Japanese Americans are upwardly mobile because of their belief in effort, importance of family honor and community status, strong sense of pragmatism, higher levels of assimilation, and accessing educational avenues.

In a society where cultural assimilation is expected, a bicultural balance may be difficult to maintain as Tanabe and Rochon (in press) found in working with the Hmong community in Wisconsin. Tanabe and Rochon discovered that Hmong parents and their children were committed to the educational and career

success of their young people, however this was a struggle because of less financial resources, lack of language abilities, and lack of educational networks.

Tanabe and Rochon, however, created and implemented the Hmong Leadership Project. The purpose of this program was to develop a pipeline for members of the Hmong community in Wisconsin to become teachers and principals. At the time they started the program, there were no Hmong teachers in the local school districts. Through a comprehensive collaboration between local Hmong elders, university faculty, and local educator organizations, they established a pipeline program. Their program has been successful and over 40 Hmong have become certified teachers and one woman is now a principal in the local district in Wisconsin.

The cultural assimilation process was proceeding at a rapid pace. Many of the new Hmong teachers, who were second generation, could no longer speak Hmong. Though the first language of these young certified teachers was Hmong and they are in their mid twenties, they lacked the vocabulary to effectively communicate with Hmong parents. The process of cultural assimilation had enveloped them so they asked for Hmong interpreters to assist them in parent-teacher conferences. The Hmong teachers found themselves without an extensive vocabulary that allowed them to successfully communicate with Hmong parents. This led to the addition in the Hmong Leadership Project of a cultural preservation component. It became apparent that the Hmong community desired to preserve their culture, but did not know how to do so. They approached Rochon and Tanabe and consequently, cultural and linguistic components were integrated into the program. The collaborative leadership of the project understood that ethnic identity and ethnic community were still critical components of how Hmong teachers identified themselves.

4.5. Conclusion and Recommendations

This chapter demonstrates how Bronfenbrenner's model can be used to explain how multiple forces influence the actions of parents in the development of their children. This model can be taught to teachers so they better understand the complex sociocultural systems that influence the achievement of Asian Pacific American students. Teachers can also understand how to utilize the model in developing programs that will more fully serve APA youth. Though parents and immediate family members are most significant, other influences affect children.

The psychological, sociological, anthropological, and historical research cited in this chapter indicates that parents utilize multiple pathways in various micro-, meso-, and macrosystems to ensure that their children develop the cultural capital they will need to succeed in schools and in their vocations. In addition, many parents are aware that Asian Pacific Americans are marginalized in society. Additionally, parents are often unaware that the process of cultural assimilation also may create issues of identity confusion and the loss of traditional culture in

their children. The educational advancement of APA children is a complex one and parents continue to be one of the core factors in their achievement.

Researchers have found Asian Pacific American parents to be actively involved in the achievement process. The cultural capital they have transferred to their children has assisted them in the learning process. It is also important for school personnel to develop programs and activities that are specifically designed to assist Asian Pacific American parents and their children to better understand the ongoing process of cultural assimilation and the practices of schooling (Goodwin, 1997). Though parents may hold high expectations for their children, they may not understand the workings and practices of schools. In addition since 65 percent of APAs are immigrants, school personnel must institute various avenues to engage parents. The following is a short list of recommendations for educators to consider in their quest to improve the delivery of education to APA students:

1) Open and increased communication between parents and school is always important in the education of children. Encourage and invite parents to participate in school activities and committees. Often parents whose native language is not English may not feel able to express themselves at Parent Teacher Association (PTA) meetings. APA parents are more likely to attend if they are personally invited by other parents and teachers. Interpreters can be on hand so parents whose home language is other than English can understand what is being said and respond.
2) Teachers can bring parents into the classroom as guest experts whether on cooking, history, photography, sports, or other hobbies. When parents are included in classroom learning, teachers and students learn, while this reinforces the importance of parent-school relationships. Parents and students will also feel valued for their knowledge and abilities.
3) Since so many parents are immigrants, school personnel might consider offering English classes in the evening for parents. This again allows schools to become community centers for parents and children. While parents are attending English classes, students could be attending homework or tutoring sessions whether in elementary or high school. This strengthens relationships between parents and schools.
4) Have a school newsletter translated into major languages in the community. Some APA parents may not be able to read proficiently in English, however they are literate in their native language. Get district personnel to translate newsletters into a variety of languages such as Cambodian, Spanish, and Vietnamese if parents speak these languages.
5) Racism is one of the continuing issues that APA parents and children identify. Ask parents and young people what the school can do to address the racism that is being encountered whether through staff development, inclusion of monthly civil rights rallies, and the presentation of plays, books, or displays about famous Asian Pacific Americans such as Fred Korematsu, Dith Pran, Bill Lann Lee, or Patsy Mink.

APA parents and students value education and want to be involved in school activities. Teachers, moreover, can enhance the learning experience. The Bronfenbrenner theory can assist teachers in better understanding that child development is influenced by numerous levels of interactions. As the work of Tanabe and Rochon (2006) has demonstrated, educational programs that tie into all four ecological levels are more effective because they address the comprehensive needs of students. Education is a process that must include important stakeholders; parents are most central to this endeavor.

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