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Model Minority Mismatch: Exploring the Community College Experience and Persistence of Southeast Asian American Students

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MODEL MINORITY MISMATCH:
EXPLORING THE COMMUNITY COLLEGE EXPERIENCE
AND PERSISTENCE
OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN AMERICAN STUDENTS

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my dear mom and dad whose love, support and wisdom have guided me always.

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Abstract

This study aimed to investigate the relationship of Southeast Asian American student involvement and persistence in urban community colleges of Illinois. There are large gaps in research regarding the academic struggles of Southeast Asian American students because most data concerning Asian Americans is aggregate, consolidating all experiences rather than considering each sub-group independently. The existing data revealed that Asian Americans are performing exceptionally well in academics, especially when compared to other minority groups, such as African American and Latinos, resulting in Asian Americans being stereotyped as the "model minority" (CARE, 2008). However, a closer assessment of the data shows that only a portion of the Asian American population are performing well academically and is skewing the data for other sub-groups (Le, 2008). A large number of Eastern and Southern Asian students are graduating and obtaining the higher education degrees in higher numbers, whereas, an overwhelming number of the Southeast Asian and Pacific Islander students face many hurdles in their academic pursuits (CARE, 2008). There are many reasons as to why Southeast Asian and Pacific Islander American students may encounter more difficulties in school compared to their Eastern and Southern Asian American counterparts including: recent immigrant or refugee status, low English proficiency, low socioeconomic status and parents' lack of formal education from native country and/or lack of familiarity with U.S. school system (Uy, 2001).

Therefore, many educational leaders fail to realize that the Asian American population is comprised of several different ethnicities with characteristics and struggles unique to their particular group (CARE, 2008). There has been a surge in Southeast Asian American students in the community colleges due largely to community college's open access policy and affordable tuition, especially in the Midwest and Southern states (CARE, 2008). Although, many

community college leaders are not aware that this particular group of students also have many of the same academic struggles as other groups. A qualitative case study was employed to obtain data. The qualitative research strategy yielded a well-rounded understanding of the subject. This study shed light on the academic obstacles Southeast Asian American students face in Illinois community colleges so that more policies may be implemented to meet the needs of this under-represented group.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Background and Context of the Issue

Presently, there are 39 public community college districts composed of 48 colleges in Illinois serving the diverse needs of Illinois' communities (ICCB, 2010). As the nation, and more specifically, the state of Illinois, continues to diversify and the cost of higher education continues to increase, community colleges play a significant role in opening the door to higher education for immigrant and first-generation college students.

The U.S. Census Bureau (2010) predicts that in just three decades, there will be no single racial or ethnic group will comprise a majority in the U.S. In fact, census officials described the U.S. as being a "plurality nation" as it becomes more diverse (Cooper, 2012). The non-Hispanic white population will fall below the 50 percent mark by 2043, while, the Hispanic population will double from 53.3 to 128.8 million in 2060. In the same time period, the black population will increase from 41.2 million to 61.8 million and the Asian population will double from 15.9 million to 34.4 million (U.S. Census, 2010) Thus, the ever-evolving American population calls for necessary changes in society, especially in education. For instance, Asian Americans have been stereotyped as the "model minority" who are successful, self-starters who need little to no help from outside agencies (Le, 2001). Yet, a closer examination of the Asian American population reveals that the academic experiences of Asian students are as expansive as any other group and the model minority stereotype only tells the tale of a portion of the group.

In 2008, the College Board and National Commission on Asian American and Pacific Islander Research in Education (CARE) published a report: "Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, Fact, Not Fiction: Setting the Record Straight," which dismantles prevailing myths about Asian Americans and Asian Pacific Islanders. The report revealed much of the data used to

support Asian Americans as the model minority is aggregate and fails to acknowledge that Asian-Americans are comprised of many different cultures with experiences and value systems (CARE, 2008). Many educational institutions overlook the fact that Southeast Asian American and Pacific Island (AAPI) students are in the same dire straits as their African-American and Hispanic peers for many reasons.

First, educators have been deeply conditioned by the Asian "model minority" myth to think of the Asian American student as self-motivating and self-excelling (CARE, 2008). Second, demographic data taken for Asian-American students is consolidated rather than being considered independently (Yang, 2003). A wide range of countries and cultures fall under the Asian American and Pacific Islander category. An Asian American is any "persons with ancestry from Asian countries and islands in the Pacific Rim who live in the United States" (Takeuchi et al, 2008, p. ix). Countries that comprise this region include: Cambodia, China, India, Japan, Korea, Thailand, Malaysia, Pakistan, the Philippines, Laos, and Vietnam. Hmong is not a country but is classified as an ethnicity in the U.S. Census Bureau. Each sub-group contains its own culture, language and value system as well as economic and educational background.

Unlike their Asian American counterparts, Southeast Asian American students face different challenges that contribute to their academic difficulties. A Southeast Asian American has ethnic roots from Cambodia, Thailand, Laos, and Vietnam. For example, while most of the nation's Hmong and Cambodian adults have not graduated high schools, many Pakistanis and Indians have at least a bachelor's degree (CARE, 2008). Therefore, the small number of high-achieving students obscures the challenges of certain subgroups (CARE, 2008). Some of these

challenges include: poverty, low educational attainment, linguistic isolation, and parents' lack of familiarity with the U.S. school system (Uy, 2008).

However, because of the "model minority" stereotype of Asian Americans, Southeast Asian American students are not given the proper attention to help overcome these obstacles. As a result, the additional support and resources necessary to help boost academic success of minority students must be readily available to support Asian American and Pacific Island (AAPI) students' pursuit of higher education via community college. However, because the academic struggles of the AAPI student are clouded by the "model minority" stereotype, many educational leaders do not recognize AAPI students as having to contend with the same issues other communities face and more often than not, many AAPI students are left to struggle on their own (CARE, 2008).

Increased student enrollment and diversity in student body are realities for many of community colleges. Becoming more aware of their students' unique needs has become increasingly important on Illinois community college campuses, especially when there is a growing presence of a group, such as AAPI students, that has had a history of being overlooked. This study examines the factors related to persistence among AAPI students in Illinois community colleges.

Significance of the Study

This study fills one of the many gaps in the research literature on the Southeast Asian American students. It is the hope of the researcher that this study shed more light on the subject and as a consequence, more research and policy addressing the needs of Southeast Asian American students will be born. Just like other students, AAPI students are attracted to community college's open enrollment policy and low tuition. In fact, enrollment of AAPI

students at community colleges is increasing at faster rate than at four-year universities. According to a study performed by two New York University research centers and the College Board, which administers the SAT exam, between 1990 and 2000, AAPI enrollment in public two-year colleges increased 73.3 percent, compared to 42.2 percent at public four-year colleges and a 53.4 percent increase at private four-year colleges. Although AAPI students are usually evenly dispersed among two-year and four-year institutions, in some states, such as California and Nevada, over half of AAPI students attend community college (CARE, 2008).

However, the largest increase of AAPI students at community colleges is occurring in the Midwest and South. Between 1990 and 2000, AAPI community college enrollment increased by 86 percent in the South and 75.2 percent in the Midwest, compared to 56.4% in the West and 59.3% in the Northeast (CARE, 2008). The study stated that educators and policymakers are unaware of the trends occurring at community colleges and this lack of awareness "can be attributed to the very assumption that Asian-American and Pacific Islander college students only exist in our most selective universities" (CARE, 2008, p. 1). The perception that AAPI students attend only four-year universities is problematic because the needs of struggling AAPI students in community colleges are not addressed.

Subsequently, community colleges must recognize the needs of AAPI students to support the increasing number of AAPI students on campuses, especially in the Midwest and Southern states. Because many AAPI students have performed poorly in their secondary education, community college is viewed as an alternative option to seek a viable career path or a second chance to prepare for a baccalaureate degree. There is a large gap in research concerning the experiences of AAPI students in general, but especially in the community college (Park, n.d.). Therefore, a better understanding of the AAPI students' experiences in Illinois community

colleges would help in identifying how community colleges can better aid AAPI students in their pursuit of higher education.

Purpose of the Study

This study qualifies the Southeast Asian American experience in Illinois community colleges. The growing number of diverse Asian American students in community college calls for more research to explore their distinct set of strengths and obstacles. A better understanding of the experience of this particular group's collegiate experience can help to increase community college's ability to serve their needs.

Guiding Questions

This study will seek to find answers to questions concerning Southeast Asian American students' experience in Illinois community college, especially in the perspective of persistence and student involvement. The main question of this study is: What are the contributing factors of persistence for Southeast Asian American community college students?

The following are guiding questions that will be asked to obtain further information:

1) What academic factors contribute to the Southeast Asian American students' decision to attend and persist in community college?

2) How do co-curricular/extra-curricular activities contribute to the persistence of Southeast Asian American students?

3) What role does family contribute to the persistence Southeast Asian American students?

4) What role does campus personnel and faculty contribute to the persistence of Southeast Asian American students?

Brief Review of the Literature

Introduction

Before discussing the Asian "model minority" stereotype, the historical context surrounding the idea must be discussed. The Asian "model minority" stereotype may seem like positive reinforcement. In reality, the "model minority" myth actually serves to hinder the progression of Asians and other American minorities. The National Commission on Asian American and Pacific Islander Research in Education (CARE) published a report *Asian Americans Facts, Not Fiction: Setting the Record Straight* in 2008. The goal of CARE's research project was to use empirical data to address and overturn prominent myths about Asian American and Pacific Island students for the advancement of social and economic opportunities of all people.

The History behind the Stereotype

Historically, the model-minority perception relieves educational institutions of responsibility for student success and unjustly places Asian Americans in opposition to other minority students. In other words, Asian-Americans are perceived to be successful, hard-working and self-sufficient, while African-American and Hispanic students are perceived as not trying hard enough. Still, the false positive perception of Asian Americans is a relatively new phenomenon. Before the "model minority" stereotype emerged, Asian Americans were regarded with the same negative, discriminatory treatment as African-Americans and Hispanics. There are many examples of U.S. government policy against Asians. For instance, the *Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882* turned Chinese Americans into the first "illegal aliens" prohibiting them from ever becoming naturalized Americans and stripping citizenship from those who were already American citizens (CARE, 2008).

There was also the *1924 Immigration Act,* which banned Asians from entering the U.S. and applied harsh limitations on the entry of Eastern and Southern Europeans (CARE, 2008). During World War II, 120,000 Japanese-Americans, of which 64% were American-born, were forced from their homes to live in internment camps as suspected "enemy aliens." Additionally, at the height of the Civil Rights Movement, William Peterson coined the term "model minority" for Asian Americans in a 1966 *New York Times Magazine* article (as cited in Lim, 2001). Since then, Asian Americans have been considered the obedient, self-made, high-achieving minority who excel in academics, especially in math and science.

Mismatch: Model Minority Thesis and Asian American Students

As with all stereotypes, there are a few students who fit the criterion and then there are many who do not. The "model minority" myth is no different. There are many Asian Americans who have accomplished great achievements, but they should be viewed as exceptions, not as the norm. The shift of recognizing Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders as a "model minority" did not celebrate Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, but instead served to "reinforce how Black Americans were 'still the problem'" (CARE, 2008, p. 1). Asian American students have served as the model for success for other low achieving minority groups. Under the pretense of "model minority," the notion is that other minority students failed scholastically simply because they were not putting forth the same effort as Asian Americans students (CARE, 2008).

To further elaborate on the negative effects of the "model minority" stereotype, a member of the College Board, Alma R. Clayton-Pederson stated, "The notion of lumping all people into a single category and assuming they have no needs is wrong…It (the "model minority" stereotype) is almost like the reverse of what happened to African-Americans" (as cited in Lewin, 2008, p. 1). Similar to when the responsibility for inequality shifted to African Americans when they

became “the problem,” the responsibility for educational success moved from the schools to the individual students when Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders became “the solution” (CARE, 2008). When all responsibilities falls upon the student, then government and institutions are relieved of important organizational issues, like curriculum, resource allocation and who gets left behind (CARE, 2008).

The “model minority” myth underscores the need for disaggregate data (CARE, 2008). Because the Asian American and Pacific Islander category is diverse, it is inaccurate to perceive the group under one scope. The Asian Pacific Islander group is composed of many different languages, cultures, and lengths of U.S. residency. Immigration status, language ability, and socio-economic status vary among the different ethnic groups in the “Asian” category and thus, result in different educational experiences across Asian American sub-groups. To address the diversity of Asian- Americans and the various challenges individuals within the group faces, The Alliance for Excellent Education (2007) stated:

> (The “model minority” stereotype)…often cloaks the complicated and diverse barriers that many members of this student population encounter, including immigration and refugee status, limited English proficiency, and poverty, as well as the experiences of ethnic subgroups that do not fare as well academically. Because of the lack of disaggregated data, the Asian American statistics primarily reflect East Asians’ overall academic successes and obscure the scholastic struggles of groups such as Southeast Asians and Pacific Islanders. (p. 1)

American families that originate from Southeast Asia and Pacific Islands are more likely than other Asian families to be living at poverty level, face language barriers and experience post-war

trauma, all of which makes students add to the probability that these students are at high risk for being unsuccessful in school. The Alliance for Excellent Education (2007) also added,

> It is clear that many Asian Pacific Islander American (APIA) students are not being adequately served by the nation's public schools. Changes in the way they are educated must be made if America is to meet the goal of preparing all K–12 students for college, work, and life. (p. 1)

The graduation rates and college retention statistics of Southeast Asian American and Pacific Islander students are low. About 71 percent of students graduate from high school (College Board, 2008). Besides Asian students, the dropout rate for minority students is higher than white students. In 2007, 58 percent Hispanics, 55 percent black and 51 percent of American Indian students graduated high school. Due to a lack of disaggregated data, Asian students have the highest graduation rate, but this statistic is more reflective of East Asian students and conceals the academic adversities of other Asian American students (College Board, 2008). A closer look at the data shows about 50 percent of Cambodians and Laotians and about 60 percent of Hmong age 25 or older did not graduate high school (College Board, 2008).

In their report published in 2010 titled *Federal Higher Education Policy Priorities and the Asian American and Pacific Islander Community*, the National Commission on Asian American and Pacific Islander Research in Education (CARE) reported that the largest sector of AAPI college enrollment, at 47.3%, was in the community college sector in 2005. Lower tuition, open admissions and proximity to home all are factors that influence AAPI student to enroll in community college versus four year university (CARE, 2010). While AAPIs made up less than five percent of the national population in 2007, they represented almost seven percent of all community college students (CARE, 2010). CARE (2010) noted that the increase of AAPI

students in community college will most likely to continue and outpace enrollment in other sectors of higher education. The rise of AAPI student enrollment in community college was significant a decade of ago when the AAPI population increased 73.3% between 1990 and 2000 compared to an increase of just 42.2% in public four-year institutions. CARE (2010) also commented on how AAPI students are characteristically different from their peers in four-year institutions. A few of these differences are that AAPIs in community college tend to enroll as part-time students, are older than AAPIs in four-year universities with an average age of 27.3 years (CARE, 2010). Actually, 40.5 percent of AAPI in community college are older than the age of 25 years (CARE, 2010). The differences of AAPI students in community colleges compared to those in four-year universities suggest that AAPIs in community college would most likely fit the characteristics of "non-traditional" students.

In addition, AAPI community college students are also most likely to carry many "risk factors" that positively associate with lower rates of persistence and completion among two-year college students (CARE, 2010). Some of these risk factors include: delayed enrollment, lack of high school diploma (including GED recipients), part-time time enrollment, having dependents other than a spouse, single parent status, and working full-time while enrolled (35 hours or more) (CARE, 2010). Also, AAPIs community college students tend to be the first in their family to attend college and come from low socio-economic backgrounds. One-third of AAPI college students come from families whose income is less than $40,000 per year (CARE, 2010).

Also, AAPI students are more likely to be struggle with English proficiency because many are recent immigrants, often refugees who have fled war zones (Brydolf, 2009). Many recent AAPI students are war refugees and asylum seekers "sometimes come to school suffering from post-traumatic and other emotional problems" adding to the complexity and uniqueness of

AAPI students (Brydolf, 2009, p. 41). The report titled "Left in the Margins: Asian American Students and the No Child Left Behind Act," from the Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund, stated Asian American students are "struggling, failing and dropping out of schools that ignore their need" despite the model minority stereotype (as cited in Brydolf, 2009, p. 39). The report also found "that some schools allow Asian American ELL (English Language Learner) students to drop out or even intentionally push out for fear that ELLs will score low on NCLB –mandated standardized tests" (as cited in Brydolf, 2009, pp. 38-39).

Recent census data revealed that a large portion of California's AAPI population are living on the margins of mainstream society and that Asian households have the highest level of "linguistic isolation" which is defined as a household that does not include anyone 14 years old or older who speaks English "very well" (Brydolf, 2009, p. 42). For example, in El Monte, California, half of Asian households are considered linguistically isolated and in San Francisco, nearly 30,000 families do not include anyone over the age of 14 who speaks English very well (Brydolf, 2009). The lack of English proficiency for AAPI population has great implication for its students, parents and schools in general. For instance, the lack of English proficiency impedes AAPI parents from communication and interaction with school staff. Uy (2008) commented on the consequences of low English proficiency of AAPI parents and the lack of bilingual Southeast Asian (SEA) staff to accommodate these families:

> Oftentimes teachers complain about the lack of parental involvement of the Southeast Asian American parents. Yet, how can limited-English proficient parents engage with teachers and school personnel if they cannot understand the language? Parents are not able to discuss or seek assistance for their children's academic needs and skill acquisition. Nor can they provide their children support with their homework, college

> planning, or career counseling. The lack of bilingual SEA staff and teachers exacerbates this problem as well. (p. 46)

For instance, California is one state that is experiencing a significant demographic shift, with a large number of non-English speakers. Although the state is most focused on the special needs of its Hispanic students that make up half of its public school students, Brydolf says that "it's not a zero sum game" for Asian American students (2009, p. 42). She insisted that "strategies that help engage immigrant Latino parents can also reach out to AAPI families who aren't fluent in English" (Brydolf, 2009, p. 42). For example, when Larry Ferlazzo, veteran teacher was faced with the task of finding a way to help 200 Hmong students who recently arrived from a refugee camp in Laos in early 2000, he created an ESL computer lab class for his Hmong students and recruited native English speaking students as peer tutors. Ferlazzo's program was so successful that it was able to move out of Program Improvement status under No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and he has won international honors (Brydolf, 2009).

Fortunately, recently there has been more attention paid to the increasing needs of English language instruction for English language learners and especially for more accurate data and resource allocation for the AAPI community on the federal level, at least in California. Congressman Michael Honda, a former teacher and principal introduced a new legislation, the Strengthening Communities through Education and Integration Act to increase resources for English language instruction and expanded learning time for English learners, provide tax credits for teachers who earn English-language certification, and give employers incentives to offer English instruction for workers (Brydolf, 2009). Additionally, Honda and his colleagues in the Asian Pacific American Caucus continue to advocate for more information and support for the AAPI community on the federal level (Brydolf, 2009). After understanding the importance of

separating AAPI data, Senator Gloria Romero introduced a bill that requires the California Department of Education to disaggregate AAPI data and to publish those numbers on the department website in 2008 (Brydolf, 2009). Other states, including Illinois, need to follow California's footsteps in passing legislation that would help AAPI students succeed in school.

Despite the adversities of many Asian American and Pacific Islander students in secondary education, the open door policy and low cost tuition of community college are attracting more and more Asian American and Pacific Islanders. According to CARE (2007):

> …Far more AAPI (Asian American Pacific Island) students are attend(ing) public two-year and four-year colleges. In fact, most AAPI students attend public institutions, and in some states, like California and Nevada, over half of all AAPI college students are attending community colleges. In 2000, for example, there were 363,798 AAPIs enrolled in public two-year colleges in the United States compared to 101, 751 enrolled in private four-year colleges. (p. 9)

In 2003, KaYing Yang offered a *Congressional Testimony for Southeast Asian Americans and Higher Education* citing crucial statistical data from the 1990 and 2000 U.S. Census data and recent studies on Asian American students and data from California public schools. According to the 2000 Census, 1,814,301 people in the United States reported heritage in Cambodia, Laos and/or Vietnam. They accounted for .64 percent of the total U.S. population, and 15.2 percent of the total number of people who report Asian and/or Pacific Islander heritage (as cited in Yang, 2003, p. 2). Yang (2003) stated:

> Available data indicate that the educational profiles of many Southeast Asian American ethnic groups more closely resemble those of African American, Hispanic, and Native

> American communities… However, patterns of Southeast Asian American educational difficulty remain invisible to most policymakers. (p. 2)

Yang noted the scarcity of existing data on Southeast Asian in higher education.

However, she noted the group is diverse and while some have proven to be successful others have experienced great difficulty. Generally, it seems Cambodians and Laotians "tend to experience especially great difficulties" (Yang, 200, p. 33). For instance, by analyzing school-year data study performed in 1989-1990 from the San Francisco Unified School District, Rumbaed found all 12.8 percent of Cambodian American students in grade 10, 11, and 12 in his sample dropped out of high school. This was the highest drop-out rate for any ethnic group (Yang, p. 6, 2003).

Yang (2003) listed the four major factors that contribute to the academic gap that separates Southeast Asian Americans from other American students: (1) limited English proficiency (LEP); (2) systematic miscommunication between students, parents, and teachers; (3) discrimination; (4) widespread feelings of alienation from mainstream schools. To improve upon these factors Yang recommended disaggregating and disseminating more data on Southeast Asian American students to policy-makers, teachers, and other decision makers, promote Southeast Asian American studies and personnel, support community organizations because of their promotion of academic success and creating new systems for financial and technical support.

Chang (2005) published a report "Faculty-Student Interaction at the Community College: A Focus on Student of Color." This study examined the level of faculty-student interaction on community college campuses. A sample of 2500 students were used in this study and findings revealed low interaction between students of color and faculty members but especially for

students of Asian American/Pacific Islander and Latino groups. The study found results unique to only Asian American/Pacific Islander student group. Many factors that are positive correlates for faculty-student interaction for other racial group have no correlation for Asian American/Pacific Islander student. For example, being older, having educated parents, spending more time on campus have no effect and sometimes negative effect on whether the student interacts more often with faculty members. This finding is demonstrative of a possible mismatch of communications styles between Asian American/ Pacific Islander students and the community college. Or it could also mean these students are perhaps substituting benefits gained from faculty interaction with support outside of school, such as, parents, family or community members. Also, these students tend to agree more strongly than other ethnic groups with the statement "things are harder for me because of my race or ethnicity." Hence, Asian American/ Pacific Islander students perceive a negative racial climate that inhibits their interaction with faculty. Chang referred to findings from Pope's (2002) study on minority mentoring in two-year colleges to substantiate her findings.

Similar to Chang (2005), Pope (2002) found that while Asian American students had the highest level of agreement with the statement that "mentoring is important for success at this institution," they also felt least supported in regards to the opportunities for faculty-student interaction and provision of a faculty member who could mentor a diverse student group. Pope (2002) postulated that institutions may be supporting the "model minority myth" and not actively offering resources and services to Asian American students, therefore eliciting such perceptions.

Conceptual and/or Theoretical Framework

Astin's Theory of Student Involvement and Critical Race Theory served as the framework for this study. Over the past three decades, there has been an extensive body of

evidence demonstrating the strong correlation between student involvement and student achievement (Friedlander & MacDougal, 1992). Astin (1985), one of the originators of student involvement theory, postulated students involved in both academic and social aspects of their college experience are more likely to spend more time studying, working on campus, participating in student organization and interacting with faculty.

However, many community college students may find it difficult to initiate involvement in campus activities due to his/her circumstances or background. Generally, the studies show the more time and effort students devote in their course work, the greater the personal growth and academic achievement, satisfaction with college and persistence in college will be (as cited in Friedlander & MacDougall, 1992). Friedlander and MacDougal (1992) stated,

> The strong relationship between student involvement, persistence and satisfaction with college is firmly established through research at colleges and universities. Studies at community colleges using the Community College Student Experiences Questionnaire have yielded similar findings. The amount and quality of effort invested by students in taking advantage of the opportunities in the college setting has been found to be a much more important factor in explaining achievement is that student background characteristics and type of college attended. On the surface, such findings are obvious. Less obvious are the step college educators can take to influence the extent to which students will participate in activities that will contribute a great deal to their learning and development. The Theory of Student Involvement and examples of how it has been applied have been presented as a means by which community college practitioners can increase the odds of students succeeding in college. (p. 7)

In learning more about the Southeast Asian American student experience in community college, hopefully, institutional leaders will be better equipped to serve this underserved group's needs.

Critical Race Theory (CRT) is another framework that was used for this study. Critical Race Theory stems from legal scholarship group known as critical legal scholars (CLS) and was conceived as oppositional scholarship from mainstream legal scholars discourse (as cited from Closson, 2010). The CLS group is a mix of leftist law faculty, students and practitioners. Although legal scholars of color agreed that race is social construct, they also believed race held a "material dimension" in people's lives. The term "Critical Race Theory" was coined in the mid-1980's by thirty-five law scholars at the Critical Race Theory Workshop in which they gathered specifically to explicitly synthesize, "a theory that, while grounded in critical theory, was responsive to the realities of racial politics in America" (as cited from Closson, 2010).

Buenavista, Jayakumar, and Misa-Escalante (2009) asserted, "Critical Race Theory can be used as holistic way of looking at Asian American students' experience" (p. 69). Critical Race Theory (CRT) as an "alternative theoretical perspective that permits the examination and transcendence of conceptual blockages, while simultaneously offering alternative perspectives on higher education policy and practice and the AAPI student population" (Teranishi et al, 2009, p. 58). Solorzano stated that "Critical Race Theory in education challenges the traditional claims of the educational system and its institution to objectivity, meritocracy, color and gender blindness, race and gender neutrality, and equal opportunity (as cited in Teranishi et al, 2009, p. 58).

CRT has been useful for the critique of deficit thinking-by providing alternative pedagogies and methodologies through which scholars and student can "unlearn" stereotypical thinking about race which has been especially important for the study of AAPI, given the extent to which stereotypes and assumptions may have driven the treatment of this population (as cited

in Teranishi et al, p. 58, 2009). An understanding of AAPI educational experiences can be ascertained by CRT by recognizing the distinct racialized status of AAPIs, along with their social, political, and structural position in society (Teranishi et al, 2009). Consequently, CRT can be an effective lens to examine and challenge normative paradigms, which define mainstream policy discourse and determine appropriate concerns for education research (Teranishi et al, 2009).

Summary

The rise of Asian American students in community colleges necessitates more research on this particular group so that community colleges can figure out best how to meet their needs. Policy makers and college leaders have generally been unaware of Southeast Asian American students' challenges which have been cloaked under the "model minority" myth. The limited literature on Southeast Asian American students' experience in community college reflects the need for more discussion and policy regarding the needs of this specific group.

Methodology

Introduction

The literature review and conceptual framework provided the structure for the methodology of the study. A qualitative case study situated in interpretive design was used. The study was based on in-depth semi-structured interviews, online demographic survey, and document review. In this section, the criterion for field site selection and participants, data collection procedure, and the organization and analysis of the data will be elaborated upon.

Research Design

This study will implement a qualitative case study research design. Student questionnaires and in-depth interviews will be used to gather data. The qualitative aspect will

help to further illuminate the subject because the personal narratives of the students are essential in gaining insight into their experiences. The personal narratives will be gained through open-ended questions asked through in-depth interviews. Merriam (2002) stated,

> The key to understanding qualitative research lies with the idea that meaning is socially constructed by individuals in interaction with their world. …Learning how individuals experience and interact with their social world, the meaning it has for them, is considered an *interpretive* qualitative approach. (p. 3)

Data Collection Procedures

Site and participation selection. Purposeful sampling will be used to determine the sites and participants for the study. Patton (1990) stated, "The power of purposeful sampling lies in selecting information-rich cases for study in depth…those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central purpose of the evaluation, thus the term 'purposeful sampling'" (p. 52). Johnson and Christensen (2008) defined purposeful sampling as the researcher specifying "the characteristics of the population of interests and locate individuals with those characteristics" (p. 598).

The U.S Census projects that by 2060, the Asian population will nearly double. Asian Americans were the fastest growing race group with 30 percent growth in nearly every state over the last decade (U.S. Census, 2010). Out of the total U.S. population, 14.7 million people, or 4.8 percent reported as Asian alone, while another 0.9 percent or 2.6 million people reported being Asian in combination with one or other races (U.S. Census, 2010). Outside of California and the East Coast, Chicago is the number one choice destination for Asian immigrants and ranks 7th out of the top 10 cities with the most Asian Americans (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). In fact, Illinois

has an Asian population of 5.8% which is comparable to most U.S. states, except those states that comprise of Asian majority such as California and Hawaii (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010).

Because of the dramatic increase of Southeast Asian American students in the community colleges of the Midwest and the urban and suburban of Illinois; the community colleges of Illinois will be studied. The criteria for site selection are as follows: a community college in either the urban or suburban regions of Illinois and comprises a Southeast Asian American student population of three percent or greater. The criteria for the participant selection are as follows: be a part-time or full-time student in an urban or suburban Illinois community college, be U.S. citizen or permanent resident and be of Southeast Asian American descent with an accumulation of at least 20 credits or be an ABE/ESL student in the institution for at least two semesters. Furthermore, Patton (1990) defined homogeneous sampling as "the strategy of picking a small homogeneous sample. The purpose is to describe some particular sub-group in-depth" (p. 54).Therefore, the sample of this study is limited to Southeast Asian-American students.

Instrumentation and/or interview protocol. A questionnaire will be distributed to the Southeast Asian American students (see Appendix D). Individual interviews using open-ended questions were used to obtain data. All interviewees will be asked the same open-ended questions. The interviews will take place in a neutral location, tape-recorded and transcribed. Interviewees will be given an opportunity to review the transcript and make changes if deemed necessary.

Limitations

There are limitations to this study.

- The first limitation is that all the community colleges in the study are only in the suburban and urban regions of Illinois.
- Second, the study is limited to only students of Southeast-Asian descent. Also, since participation for the study is voluntary, the original population may be reduced in size.
- Third, the sample size may be too small to make generalizations for the larger population.
- Fourth, the aggregate data or phenomenon of "lumping" all Asian Americans in the majority research and literature may cause difficulty in to identifying students as Southeast Asian American and/Pacific Islander.
- Lastly, the researcher is Southeast-Asian descent and has a personal connection to the struggles of this particular group of people.

Data Analysis Procedures

> Triangulation is one method of cross-validating data. Gay and Airasian (2000) wrote, Triangulation is another important and powerful approach used to establish the credibility of a qualitative research study. Triangulation is a form of cross-validation that seeks regularities in the data by comparing different participants, settings, and methods to identify recurring results. (p. 252)

For example, the triangulation in this study will be demonstrated in the multiple interview sites which allowed for the researcher to cross-reference data from one institution to another and look for themes in responses. In addition to interviewing Southeast Asian American students, interviews will be transcribed and member-checked by participants for accuracy. Data obtained from questionnaires and interviews will be coded and analyzed.

To further maximize reliability and validity of the data obtain the researcher will take many steps. First, peer auditors will be utilized to verify trustworthiness and accuracy of the collection and analysis of data. Second, in an effort to collect the most open and honest responses from participants, the researcher will make a conscious effort to gain the trust of each participant by giving each participant ample time to adjust to interview setting and procedure and minimize interruptions to interview as much as possible.

Also, an interview protocol of a set of open-ended questions will be asked, but the participant will be encouraged to volunteer any other thoughts and feelings about their educational experiences if they wish to do so. In addition, member-checking of interviews will be used to validate the accuracy of interviews and whether analysis of data accurately reflects participants' thoughts and feelings. The interviews will be taped and transcribed verbatim and be stored in a secure and locked area. Transcriptions of interviews will be sent to participants for verification.

Definition of Terms

The following are terms and their definitions that will be used:

- **Asian American** - An American who has origins of the Far East, Southeast Asian or the Southern Asian (Indian) subcontinent
    - East Asian have origins from but not limited to China, Japan and Korea
    - Southeast Asian have origins from but not limited to Cambodia, Thailand, Vietnam, Laos, Malaysia and the Philippines
    - South Asian have origins from but not limited to India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Nepal
- **Pacific Islander American** - An American who has origins from Hawaii, Guam, Samoa, or the other Pacific Islands (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010)

- **Student Involvement** – describes a student's participation in school, in and outside the classroom
- **Student Persistence** - the act of a student lasting and continuing his/her education

Assumptions

This study will make several assumptions that must be recognized. The first assumption is that the participants will respond honestly to questions asked of them. The next assumption is the instruments used for coding are accurate. The last assumption is that there will be a large enough population of Southeast Asian American among the Asian American student population in the sample site locations to participate in the study.

Summary

This study will investigate the relationship of student involvement and persistence among Illinois Southeast Asian American community college students. Students will be asked to share their experiences in community college. Analysis and coding of data will be used to interpret data and help to find emerging themes. To establish and maintain reliability and validity, peer review of question protocol, data analysis, themes, and conclusions will be used. Furthermore, member checking, thick and rich description, and triangulation will also be used.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The purpose of this chapter is to provide background information on the college experiences of Southeast Asian American students and establish the theoretical framework in which this study will be based upon. First, the history of community colleges as it relates to Asian American students as a group will be discussed. Next, the major issues surrounding the challenges of Southeast Asian American students and the model minority myth and the existing body of literature and studies on Asian American students will be presented. Finally, the theoretical framework for the study will be elaborated. The organization of this chapter will serve to provide a broader understanding of Southeast Asian American students and the need for this study to take place.

The purpose of this study is to qualify the Southeast Asian American experience in Illinois community colleges and to analyze the relationship of persistence and student involvement for these students. Therefore, the literature reviewed for this study was based on publications and reports that qualify the experiences of Asian-Americans since many demographic reports and studies tend to lump all Asians into one category. However, when possible the literature on Southeast Asian-American students was reviewed. The purpose of this literature review is to present the current findings on the Southeast Asian American students, identify the gaps in research and provide the conceptual/theoretical concepts for this study.

Brief History of the Community Colleges

The community college is an remarkable institution and since the 20th century, it has undergone many phases of development to grow into what it is known today. The community college first started as a transfer institution; it was an alternative to relieve the burden of the four-year institution teaching first and second year students and also helped student stay closer to

home (Townsend and Bragg, 2006). Hence, the first name of the community college was "junior college." William Rainey Harper, who is known by some scholars as the father of the community colleges conceived the associate degree as an academic credential for students who completed the first two years of college. Students who earned their associate degree could either: 1) continue on to matriculate into a four-year institution, 2) continue into the work-force to find worthwhile employment after completing an adequate amount of higher education.

Not long after its inception, political, economic and social factors influenced the emergence of vocational education in the community colleges. Walter Crosby Eells and Leonard Koos supported the mission of the community college to go beyond transfer and include vocational education. Eells was not concerned whether a student followed the prescribed curriculum; in fact, it was an unexpected success, if a student graduated from a vocational program and then transferred to a four-year institution (Townsend and Bragg, 2006). Actually, Eell's transferring phenomenon foreshadowed students transferring into four-year institutions today. The community college's adoption of vocational education expanded the community college's focus into four functional areas: 1) popularization, 2) preparatory education, 3) terminal education, 4) guidance.

Many political forces helped to mold the community college as open-access institutions and the gateway to higher education, especially to people who otherwise would not have the opportunity. For example, post-World War II GI Bill provided returning soldiers many benefits, including a free education to help train for jobs and rebuild the economy. The Truman Commission in 1947 impelled the community colleges more than ever to be the access point to higher education in the U.S. According to Phillipe and Sullivan (2005), the Truman Commission

advocated for post-secondary education for all Americans and suggested the organization of a national network of community colleges to provide universal access.

Furthermore, the Carnegie Commission (1974) recognized the community colleges for "democratizing" American higher education (Townsend and Bragg, 2006). The Carnegie Commission also recognized community college as the primary portal for minorities and low-come groups to gain access to higher education. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2010), it is estimated than half of all black and Hispanic students in higher education enrolled in community college. Furthermore, Townsend and Bragg (2006) acknowledged, that although black and Hispanic students make up the two largest minority groups, Asian and Native American university students also attend community college in significant numbers.

Asian Americans and Their Relationship with Community College

The community college has always stood for affordability, accessibility and serving the community in which it resides and just like other populations, Asian Americans have taken advantage of this fact. Although popular belief assumes Asian Americans are more likely to attend private four-year universities rather than public universities or community college, studies have instead shown enrollment numbers of Asian Americans in community colleges increasing at a fast pace (CARE, 2008). In fact, the National Commission on Asian American and Pacific Islander Research in Education (CARE) published a report *Asian Americans Facts, Not Fiction: Setting the Record Straight* in 2008 reveal that a greater number of Asian American and Pacific Islanders attend public institutions, and in some states like California and Nevada, over half of these students attend a public community college. Moreover, the number of Asian American and Pacific Islander students attending community college is increasing at a faster rate than four-year institutions (CARE, 2008). Furthermore, there has been a dramatic increase of Asian American

students in the community colleges, especially the Southern and Midwestern regions of the U.S. (CARE, 2008).

According to Wang, Chang and Lew (2009) every fall the popular media publicizes the academic achievement of Asian Americans at the most elite colleges, depicts them as "whiz kids" and ignores the academic needs and challenges of the Asian subgroups. Asian American students are not considered under-represented and are seldom eligible for minority fellowships due to their high ability to achieve. More often than not, colleges around the nation use their resources to assist students of other groups. Higher education literature neglects the fact that Asian American students are a population that needs help in retention or recruitment into higher education and even rarer is literature based upon Asian Americans in the community college (Wang, Chang and Lew, 2009).

The History behind the Model Minority Stereotype

Before discussing the Asian "model minority" stereotype, the historical context surrounding the idea must be discussed. The Asian "model minority" stereotype may seem like positive reinforcement. In reality, the "model minority" myth actually serves to hinder the progression of Asians and other American minorities. According to Lee (2008), the model minority stereotype disguises the variants in academic and economic achievement across ethnic groups and among individuals. Also, the model-minority perception relieves educational institutions of responsibility for student success and unjustly places Asian Americans in opposition to other minority students (Lee, 2008). In other words, Asian-Americans are perceived to be successful, hard-working and self-sufficient, while African-American and Hispanic students are perceived as not trying hard enough.

However, Asian Americans have not always been viewed as the successful minority. Before the model minority stereotype emerged, Asian Americans were regarded with the same negative, discriminatory treatment as blacks and Hispanics. There are many examples of U.S. government policy against Asians. For instance, the *Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882* turned Chinese Americans into the first "illegal aliens" prohibiting them from ever becoming naturalized Americans and stripping citizenship from those already American citizens (CARE, 2008).

There was also the *1924 Immigration Act* banned Asians from entering the U.S. and applied harsh limitations on the entry of Eastern and Southern Europeans (CARE, 2008). During World War II, 120,000 Japanese-Americans, of which 64% were American-born, were forced from their homes to live in internment camps as suspected "enemy aliens." Additionally, at the height of the Civil Rights Movement, William Peterson coined the term "model minority" for Asian Americans in a 1966 *New York Times Magazine* article (as cited in Lim, 2001). Since then, Asian Americans have been considered the obedient, self-made, high-achieving minority who are exemplary citizens and students.

Mismatch: Model Minority Thesis and Asian American Students

The term, "model minority" for Asian Americans was first used by *New York Times Magazine* reporter William Peterson in 1966, during the climax of the Civil Rights Movement (Lim, 2001). At this time, the media and government were hungry for a way to squelch the fire behind the Civil Rights Movement, and the extinguishing solution seemed to be set Asian Americans as the ideal minority in comparison to African Americans and Hispanics. Before the coining of the model minority term, Asian Americans were subjected to discriminatory treatment, but as CARE (2008) pointed out, even after labeling Asian Americans as the "model

minority," AAPIs still experienced many adversities. For example, as a result of the Cold War, and wars in Vietnam and Middle East, many AAPI were admonished as enemies, aliens, spies and terrorists and subjected to special reporting requirements, incarceration and deportation (CARE, 2008).

And although, there is data to support Asian American as the most educated and financially stable, a closer look at the data would reveal that the Asian Americans who make up that population are those who either have been in the U.S. for several generations and/or immigrated to the U.S. for the sole purpose of education and whose families are already affluent and educated (CARE, 2008). With the recent wave of immigrants from Southeast Asia, many of these new Asian Americans carry with them many burdens that hinder their success in the U.S such as: war traumatization, low English proficiency, low socioeconomic status, and low educational status from their native countries (Uy, 2008).

As with all stereotypes, there are some people who fit the criterion and then there are many who do not. The "model minority" stereotype is no different. There are many Asian Americans who have accomplished great achievements, but they should be treated like the stellar citizens they are and not as the norm. The shift of recognizing Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders as a "model minority" did not celebrate Asian Americans and Pacific Islander, but instead served to "reinforce how Black Americans were 'still the problem'" (CARE, 2008, p. 1). Asian American students have served as the model for success for other low achieving minority groups. Under the pretense of "model minority," the notion is that other minority students failed scholastically simply because they were not putting forth the same effort as Asian Americans students (CARE, 2008).

To further elaborate on the negative effects of the "model minority" stereotype, a member of the College Board, Alma R. Clayton-Pederson stated, "The notion of lumping all people into a single category and assuming they have no needs is wrong…It (the "model minority" stereotype) is almost like the reverse of what happened to African-Americans" (as cited in Lewin, 2008, p. 1). Similar to when the responsibility for inequality shifted to African Americans when they became "the problem," the responsibility for educational success moved from the schools to the individual students when Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders became "the solution" (CARE, 2008). When all responsibilities fall upon the student, then government and institutions are relieved of important organizational issues, like curriculum, resource allocation and who gets left behind.

The "model minority" myth underscores the need for disaggregate data (Bischoff et al, 2008). Within the "Asian" category are several sub-categories of various Asian cultures that differ widely in immigration status, language ability, and economic status that directly relate to educational success. The Asian Pacific Islander group is not homogenous; rather, it is composed of many different languages, cultures, and length of U.S. residency. Because the Asian American and Pacific Islander category is diverse, it is erroneous to perceive the group under one scope.

To address the diversity of Asian-Americans and the various challenges individuals within the group face, The Alliance for Excellent Education (2007) states:

> (The "model minority" stereotype)…often cloaks the complicated and diverse barriers that many members of this student population encounter, including immigration and refugee status, limited English proficiency, and poverty, as well as the experiences of ethnic subgroups that do not fare as well academically. Because of the lack of

> disaggregated data, the Asian American statistics primarily reflect East Asians' overall academic successes and obscure the scholastic struggles of groups such as Southeast Asians and Pacific Islanders. (p. 1)

American families that originate from Southeast Asia and Pacific Islands are more likely than other Asian families to be living at poverty level, face language barriers and experience post-war trauma, all of which add to the probability that these students are at high risk for being unsuccessful in school. The Alliance for Excellent Education (2007) also adds,

> It is clear that many Asian Pacific Islander American (APIA) students are not being adequately served by the nation's public schools. Changes in the way they are educated must be made if America is to meet the goal of preparing all K–12 students for college, work, and life. (p. 1)

The graduation rates and college retention statistics of Southeast Asian American and Pacific Islander students are poor. About 71 percent of students graduate from high school (College Board, 2008). Besides Asian students, the dropout rate for minority students is higher than white students. In 2007, 58 percent Hispanics, 55 percent black and 51 percent of American Indian students graduated high school. Due to a lack of disaggregated data, Asian students have the highest graduation rate, but this statistic is more reflective of East Asian students and conceals the academic adversities of other Asian American students (College Board, 2008). A closer look at the data shows about 50 percent of Cambodians and Laotians and about 60 percent of Hmong age 25 or older did not graduate high school (College Board, 2008).

In their most recent report published in 2010 titled *Federal Higher Education Policy Priorities and the Asian American and Pacific Islander Community*, the National Commission on Asian American and Pacific Islander Research in Education (CARE) reported that the largest

sector of AAPI college enrollment, at 47.3%, was in the community college sector in 2005. Lower tuition, open admissions and proximity to home all are factors that influence AAPI student to enroll in community college versus four year university (CARE, 2010). While AAPIs made up less than five percent of the national population in 2007, they represented almost seven percent of all community college students (CARE, 2010). CARE (2010) noted that the increase of AAPI students in community college will most likely to continue and outpace enrollment in other sectors of higher education. The rise of AAPI student enrollment in community college was significant a decade of ago when the AAPI population increased 73.3% between 1990 and 2000 compared to an increase of just 42.2% in public four-year institution. CARE (2010) also comments on how AAPI students are characteristically different than their peers in four-year institutions. A few of these differences are that AAPIs in community college tend to enroll as part-time students, are older than AAPIs in four-year universities with an average age of 27.3 years (CARE, 2010). Actually, 40.5 percent of AAPI in community college are older than the age of 25 years (CARE, 2010). The differences of AAPI students in community college compared to those in four-year universities suggest that, AAPIs in community college would most likely fit the characteristics of "non-traditional" students.

In addition, AAPI community college students are also most likely to carry many "risk factors" that positively associate with lower rates of persistence and completion among two-year college students (CARE, 2010). Some of these risk factors include: delayed enrollment, lack of high school diploma (including GED recipients), part-time time enrollment, having dependents other than a spouse, single parent status, and working full-time while enrolled (35 hours or more) (CARE, 2010). Also, AAPIs community college students tend to be the first in their family to

attend college and come from low socio-economic backgrounds. One-third of AAPI college students come from families whose income is less than $40,000 per year (CARE, 2010).

Also, AAPI students are also more likely to be struggle with English proficiency because many are recent immigrants, often refugees who have fled war zones (Brydolf, 2009). Many recent AAPI students are war refugees and asylum seekers "sometimes come to school suffering from post-traumatic and other emotional problems" adding to the complexity and uniqueness of AAPI students (Brydolf, 2009, p. 41). In a report titled: "Left in the Margins: Asian American Students and the No Child Left Behind Act," from the Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund, that despite stereotypes of Asian Americans as model students, many Asian Americans are "struggling, failing and dropping out of schools that ignore their need" (as cited in Brydolf, 2009, p. 39). The report also found "that some schools allow Asian American ELL (English Language Learner) students to drop out or even intentionally push out for fear that ELLs will score low on NCLB –mandated standardized tests" (as cited in Brydolf, 2009, p. 38-39).

Recent census data revealed that a large portion of California's AAPI population are living on the margins of mainstream society and that Asian households have the highest level of "linguistic isolation" which is defined as a household that does not include anyone 14 years old or older who speaks English "very well" (Brydolf, 2009, p. 42). For example, in El Monte, California, half of Asian households are considered linguistically isolated and in San Francisco, nearly 30,000 families do not include anyone over the age of 14 who speaks English very well (Brydolf, 2009). The lack of English proficiency for AAPI population has great implication for its students, parents and schools in general. For instance, the lack of English proficiency impedes AAPI parents from communication and interaction with school staff. Uy commented on

the consequences of low English proficiency of AAPI parents and the lack of bilingual Southeast Asian (SEA) staff to accommodate these families:

> Oftentimes teachers complain about the lack of parental involvement of the Southeast Asian American parents. Yet, how can limited-English proficient parents engage with teachers and school personnel if they cannot understand the language? Parents are not able to discuss or seek assistance for their children's academic needs and skill acquisition. Nor can they provide their children support with their homework, college planning, or career counseling. The lack of bilingual SEA staff and teachers exacerbates this problem as well. (2008, p. 46)

For example, California is one state that is experiencing a significant demographic shift, with a large number of non-English speakers. Although the state is most focused on the special needs of its Hispanic students that make up half of its public school students, Brydolf says that "it's not a zero sum game" for Asian American students (2009, p. 42). She insists that "strategies that help engage immigrant Latino parents can also reach out to AAPI families who aren't fluent in English" (Brydolf, 2009, p. 42). For example, when Larry Ferlazzo, veteran teacher was faced with the task of finding a way to help 200 Hmong students who recently arrived from a refugee camp in Laos in early 2000, he created an ESL computer lab class for his Hmong students and recruited native English speaking students as peer tutors. Ferlazzo's program was so successful that it was able to move out of Program Improvement status under No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and he has won international honors (Brydolf, 2009).

Fortunately, recently there has been more attention paid to the increasing needs of English language instruction for English language learners and especially for more accurate data and resource allocation for the AAPI community on the federal level, at least in California.

Congressman Honda, a former teacher and principal introduced a new legislation, the Strengthening Communities through Education and Integration Act to increase resources for English language instruction and expanded learning time for English learners, provide tax credits for teachers who earn English-language certification, and give employers incentives to offer English instruction for workers (Brydolf, 2009). Additionally, Honda and his colleagues in the Asian Pacific American Caucus continue to advocate for more information and support for the AAPI community on the federal level (Brydolf, 2009). After understanding the importance of separating AAPI data, Senator Gloria Romero introduced a bill that requires the California Department of Education to disaggregate AAPI data and to publish those numbers on the department website in 2008 (Brydolf, 2009). Other states, including Illinois, need to follow California's footstep in passing legislation that would help AAPI students succeed in school.

Despite the adversities of many Asian American and Pacific Islander students in secondary education, the open door policy and low cost tuition of community college are attracting more and more Asian American and Pacific Islanders. According to CARE (2007):

> …Far more AAPI (Asian American Pacific Island) students are attend(ing) public two-year and four-year colleges. In fact, most AAPI students attend public institutions, and in some states, like California and Nevada, over half of all AAPI college students are attending community colleges. In 2000, for example, there were 363,798 AAPIs enrolled in public two-year colleges in the United States compared to 101,751 enrolled in private four-year colleges. (p. 9)

Conceptual and/or Theoretical Framework

Astin's Theory of Student Involvement as a theoretical framework. Astin's Theory of Student Involvement is the first lens through which the results of the present study were

analyzed. Over the past three decades, there has been an extensive body of evidence demonstrating the strong correlation between student involvement and student achievement (Friedlander & MacDougal, 1992). Astin (1985), one of the originators of student involvement theory, postulates students involved in both academic and social aspects of their college experience are more likely to spend more time studying, working on campus, participating in student organization and interacting with faculty.

However, many community college students may find it difficult to initiate involvement in campus activities due to his/her circumstances or background. Generally, studies showed the more time and effort students devote in their course work, the greater the personal growth and academic achievement, satisfaction with college and persistence in college will be (as cited in Friedlander & MacDougall, 1992). Friedlander and MacDougal (1992) stated,

> The strong relationship between student involvement, persistence and satisfaction with college is firmly established through research at colleges and universities. Studies at community colleges using the Community College Student Experiences Questionnaire, have yielded similar findings. The amount and quality of effort invested by students in taking advantage of the opportunities in the college setting has been found to be a much more important factor in explaining achievement is that student background characteristics and type of college attended. On the surface, such findings are obvious. Less obvious are the step college educators can take to influence the extent to which students will participate in activities that will contribute a great deal to their learning and development. The theory of Student Involvement and examples of how it has been applied have been presented as a means by which community college practitioners can increase the odds of students succeeding in college. (p. 7)

Astin's Theory of Student Involvement was used in this study as a way to examine the Southeast Asian American student's experience in the community college and correlate the rate of persistence with the student's extent of student involvement within the institution.

Critical Race Theory as a theoretical framework. Critical Race Theory (CRT) is another framework that was used for this study. A useful definition of CRT for this discussion is Taylor's (1998) definition: "As form of oppositional scholarship, CRT challenges the experience of whites as the normative standard and grounds its conceptual framework in the distinctive experiences of people of color" (as cited in Closson). "Critical Race Theory" was coined in the mid-1980's by thirty-five law scholars at the Critical Race Theory Workshop in which they gathered specifically to explicitly synthesize, "a theory that, while grounded in critical theory, was responsive to the realities of racial politics in America" (Closson, 2010).

"Critical Race Theory can be used as holistic way of looking at Asian American students' experience" (Buenavista, Jayakumar, Misa-Escalante, 2009, p. 69).Critical Race Theory (CRT) as "alternative theoretical perspective that permits the examination and transcendence of conceptual blockages, while simultaneously offering alternative perspectives on higher education policy and practice and the AAPI student population" (Teranishi et al, 2009, p. 58). Solorzano (1997) stated that "Critical Race Theory in education challenges the traditional claims of the educational system and its institution to objectivity, meritocracy, color and gender blindness, race and gender neutrality, and equal opportunity (as cited in Teranishi et al, 2009, p. 58). CRT has been useful for the critique of deficit thinking-by providing alternative pedagogies and methodologies through which scholars and student can "unlearn" stereotypical thinking about race which has been especially important for the study of AAPI, given the extent to which stereotypes and assumptions may have driven the treatment of this population (as cited in

Teranishi et al, 2009, p. 58). An understanding of AAPI educational experiences can be ascertained by CRT by recognizing the distinct racialized status of AAPIs, along with their social, political, and structural position in society (Teranishi et al, 2009). While normative frameworks is usually referred to identify how different racial groups are unevenly distributed across a particular outcome, CRT perspectives focus on the needs of marginalized groups, which are often overlooked. Consequently, CRT can be an effective lens to examine and challenge normative paradigms, which define mainstream policy discourse and determine appropriate concerns for education research (Teranishi et al, 2009). For AAPIs, normative frameworks place AAPIs relative to African-Americans and whites, which often results in the conclusion that race related problems in American society are dichotomous, with African-Americans and Latinos on one end of the spectrum and whites and Asians on the other (Chang, Witt, Jones, and Hakuta, 2003). The pervasiveness of this black and white paradigm has contributed to the unsteady positioning of the AAPI educational experience (Green and Kim, 2005).

Solorzano is perhaps the most influential CRT scholar in higher education and has written and coauthored many articles on CRT (Closson, 2010). In a majority of CRT articles reviewed, racism is treated as an "intersectional perspective" (Closson, 2010). Or in other words, racism helps connect the experiences of a particular group. For example, Crenshaw (1995) acknowledges that neither the discourse of sexism nor racism alone fully explains the experience of women of color (as cited in Closson, 2010, p. 268). Another example of intersectionality of racism in CRT is in the conceptualization of TribalCrit which frames Castagno and Lee's (2007) study of Native Americans and their unique history and experiences. Closson noted that:

> CRT emerged not only out of a frustration with the slow pace of change from the civil rights movement but from dissatisfaction with the critical theory's analysis or race and

> racism, a critique that also applies to adult education. At its core, CRT can be defined as a critique of the racial reform movement in the United States. Adult educators may be unclear about CRT's definition because its framework incorporates a mix of concepts, strategy, and method. (p. 276, 2010)

Since Solarzano's 2005 CRT framework, several authors using it noted that the discourse on race must be expanded to other variables and conditions away from Euro/African American experiences (as cited in Closson, 2010). Broadening the scope of CRT's race frame has resulted in the emergence of two generations of CRT (Closson, 2010). First generation CRT centers on racial manifestation as an instrument to contend for social justice and to include marginalized voices in the debates on race, racism, law and society (Closson, 2010). Whereas, second-generation CRT scholars have taken the ideas of Bell, Delgado, Williams and Crenshaw and broadened them to address other issues involving key markers of difference such as gender, ethnicity, language, culture, sexuality (as cited in Closson, 2010). The splintering of CRT into subgroups has been an important topic among CRT scholars (Closson, 2010).

According to Solorzano, "Critical theory in education challenges the traditional claims of the educational system and its institutions to objectivity, meritocracy, color and gender blindness, race and gender neutrality, and equal opportunity" (as cited in Teranishi et in Museus, 2009, p. 122). Conceptually, CRT in education challenges the idea that normative framing is an effective lens to analyze educational equity issues (Teranishi et al, 2009). Basically normative framing is typically used to recognize how different racial groups are unevenly distributed over a particular outcome, such as, graduation or participation. Whereas, CRT perspectives concentrates more on the needs of marginalized groups, which are often disregarded, in contrast to the agenda served by normative frameworks. Therefore, CRT can be an effective lens for

examining and challenging normative standard to determine appropriate matters for education research (Teranishi eta al, 2009). In this study, CRT will be used to examine whether the racial and cultural experiences of the participants affected their academic experiences and persistence.

Additional literature pertaining to Southeast Asian Americans in Higher Education. In 2003, KaYing Yang offered a *Congressional Testimony for Southeast Asian Americans and Higher Education* citing crucial statistical data from the 1990 and 2000 U.S. Census data and recent studies on Asian American students and data from California public schools. According to the 2000 Census, 1,814,301 people in the United States reported heritage in Cambodia, Laos and/or Vietnam. They accounted for 64 percent of the total U.S. population, and 15.2 percent of the total number of people who report Asian and/or Pacific Islander heritage (as cited in Yang, 2003, p. 2). Yang (2003) stated:

> Available data indicate that the educational profiles of many Southeast Asian American ethnic groups more closely resemble those of African American, Hispanic, and Native American communities….However, patterns of Southeast Asian American educational difficulty remain invisible to most policymakers. (p. 2)

Yang (2003) noted the scarcity of existing data on Southeast Asian Americans in higher education. Also, Yang (2003) cited that the Southeast Asian American group is diverse and while some have proven to be successful, others have experienced great difficulty. Generally, it seems Cambodians and Laotians "tend to experience especially great difficulties" (Yang, p. 3, 2003). For instance, by analyzing school-year data study performed in 1989-1990 from the San Francisco Unified School District, 12.8 percent of Cambodian American students in grade 10, 11, and 12 in his sample dropped out of high school. This was the highest drop-out rate for any ethnic group (Yang, 2003, p. 6).

Yang (2003) listed the four major factors that contribute to the academic gap that separates Southeast Asian Americans from other American students: (1) limited English proficiency (LEP); (2) systematic miscommunication between students, parents, and teachers; (3) discrimination; (4) widespread feelings of alienation from mainstream schools. To improve upon these factors Yang recommended disaggregating and disseminating more data on Southeast Asian American students to policy-makers, teachers, and other decision makers, promote Southeast Asian American studies and personnel, support community organizations because of their promotion of academic success and creating new systems for financial and technical support.

Chang (2005) published a report "Faculty-Student Interaction at the Community College: A Focus on Student of Color." This study examined the level of faculty-student interaction on community college campuses. A sample of 2500 students were used in this study and findings revealed low interaction between students of color and faculty members but especially for students of Asian American/Pacific Islander and Latino groups. The study found results unique to only Asian American/Pacific Islander student group. Many factors that were positive correlates for faculty-student interaction for other racial group have no correlation for Asian American/Pacific Islander student. For example, being older, having educated parents, spending more time on campus have no effect and sometimes negative effect on whether the student interacts more often with faculty members. This finding is demonstrative of a possible mismatch of communications styles between Asian American/ Pacific Islander students and the community college. It could also mean these students were perhaps substituting benefits gained from faculty interaction with support outside of school, such as, parents, family or community members. Also, these students tended to agree more strongly than other ethnic groups with the statement

"things are harder for me because of my race or ethnicity." Hence, Asian American/ Pacific Islander students perceived a negative racial climate that inhibits their interaction with faculty. Chang referred findings from Pope's (2002) study on minority mentoring in 2-year colleges to substantiate her findings.

Similar to Chang, Pope found that while Asian American students had the highest level of agreement with stating that "mentoring is important for success at this institution," they also felt least supported in regards to the opportunities for faculty-student interaction and provision of a faculty member who could mentor a diverse student group. Pope postulated that institutions may be supporting the "model minority myth" and not actively offering resources and services to Asian American students, therefore, eliciting such perceptions.

Suyemoto et al (2009) stated: "The lack of scholarship of Asian American undergraduates can perpetuate faulty assumptions that they do not face challenges in college, and those assumptions in turn can contribute to a lack of attention by educational findings, of each study." Factors that contributed to the lack of educational research of Asian Americans of the model minority myth or the assumption that Asian Americans are universally academically successful and Suyemoto et al (2009) discussed the impact of these projects on student researchers and the institution. The lack of scholarship on Asian American undergraduates can proliferate false assumptions that these students do not confront challenges in college and those assumptions can contribute to a lack of attention by educational researchers, creating a cyclical process (Suyemoto et al 2009). The study, "Asian American Students Needs Assessments" explored the needs and experiences of Asian American college students and also developed directions for future research and raising awareness of Asian American college students (Suyemoto et al, 2009). The students-as-researchers model was employed as the research

method to improve understanding of the experiences and needs of Asian American students on college campuses through the research process. An example of the use student-as-researchers research approach is when students become researchers examining the experiences of Asian American college students and their research contributes to their own edification and empowerment. Or student-as-researcher approach can also operate as community-based learning by encouraging students to address the needs of their community through research. Through this research, students provide a service to the community by increasing visibility, raising awareness and initiating public dialogues regarding the experiences and needs of Asian American students. In the process, students are empowered to take action in their relationships, institutions and social systems in order to challenge inequalities that negatively affect Asian Americans and address the frequently neglected needs of their community (Suyemoto et al, 2009). There were three goals for this qualitative study: increase knowledge regarding multifaceted lives of Asian American college students, exploring way to support these students, and addressing the underrepresentation of Asian Americans as educational and social science researchers through the students-as-researchers model. Personal interviews of Asian American students and select faculty and staff that had high contact with Asian American students were conducted. Four themes emerged from the analysis from the faculty and staff interviews: cultural isolation, language barriers, cultural misunderstanding and stereotyping, and availability of resources and support. Conversely, the four themes that emerged from the student interviews were: social isolation, racial segregation, negative experience with advising, difficulties with faculty, and importance of Asian American faculty and Asian American study course. Since Asian American studies course was identified as important to Asian American students, three outcomes resulted from the study about the course and its impact on the students: increased self-awareness,

increased motivation and involvement and more positive views of other Asian Americans (Suyemoto et al, 2009).

The term “Asian American” is fairly new and originated from the 1970’s by Chinese and Japanese students who wanted to be included in affirmative action programs (Golden, 2007). In 1977, the federal government introduced a new data collection category “Asian or Pacific Islander,” which was defined as “a person having origins in any of the original peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asian, the Indian subcontinent, or the Pacific Islands” (as cited in Golden, 2007 p. 202). Prior to 1977, the federal government counted immigrants by their respective country of origin, i.e. China, India, Japan and so forth. Soaring Asian student enrollments compelled a negative reaction against the affirmative action strategy. With Asian Americans comprising more than a quarter of its freshman class in 1984, the University of California asserted they would no longer qualify for affirmative action as an underrepresented group (Golden, 2007). Under pressure from a federal investigation for Asian quotas, Berkeley acknowledged Asian American students as “the new face of merit admissions” (Golden, 2007, p. 202).

Not only were Asian American students no longer considered under-represented but they were also held to an unfair standard to limit entrance to selective four-year universities. Golden (2007) pointed out that it was eventually found that these institutions were unofficially setting higher academic standards for capable Asian American students as a response to an unexpected surge of Asian American student applicants. This type of discrimination had occurred in prior generations with Jewish students. Most elite universities maintain a triple standard for admissions in which the bar is set highest for Asians, then whites and the lowest for African-Americans and Latinos (Golden, 2007).

However, the higher expectation for Asian students is most detrimental to low-performing ethnic groups that fall under the Southeast Asian and Pacific Island category. For example, students from countries such as Cambodia, Laos, and the Philippines often come from poorer, less educated families, have lower scores and are underrepresented in college. If they were considered as separate groups, they would qualify for affirmative action. Therefore, Southeast Asian and Pacific Islanders have lobbied to disaffiliate from the Asian American designation. Paul Ong, professor of public policy at UCLA said,

> Southeast Asian are at the very bottom of the Asian American population, with poverty rates several times higher than the national average. Some Southeast Asian communities have higher welfare dependencies than any other groups, including African-Americans and Latinos. Talking to people about college admissions and recruitment, there's growing acknowledgement there are Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders that are disadvantaged. They need to factor that somehow into screening and admissions. (as cited in Golden, 2007, p. 204)

Therefore, because of the many obstacles Southeast Asian students face, attending community college offers opportunities for a higher education that otherwise would not be available to these students.

Summary

The rise of Asian American students in community colleges necessitates more research on this particular group so that community colleges can figure out best how to meet their needs. Policy makers and college leaders have generally been unaware of Southeast Asian American students' academic difficulties which have been cloaked under the "model minority" myth. The limited literature on Southeast Asian American students' experience in community college

reflects the need for more discussion and policy regarding the needs of this particular group. However, the existing bodies of literature support the fact the model minority thesis is a stereotype that hinders all groups Asian American groups, but especially Southeast Asian American students because they are struggling most academically and economically compared to other groups. Astin's Theory of Student Involvement and Critical Race Theory were the theoretical frameworks of this study. It is the hope of this study to shed more light on the plight of the Southeast Asian American students so more policies and programming can be implemented to help this group. Chapter three will describe the methodology for the study.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This study explored the relationship of persistence and student involvement of Southeast Asian American students in Illinois community colleges. In this chapter, the methods used to obtain data will be described, including the research design, data collection procedures, site and participant selection, instrumentation and interview questions, limitations, and assumptions. Typically, the demographic data concerning Asian Americans consolidates the members of this group, disregarding the fact that Asian Americans are made of distinct original nationalities, cultures and that each member live through unique, individual experiences. Therefore, an interpretive qualitative research design was implemented to yield a better understanding of Southeast Asian American community college students. The study was based on data obtained by an online questionnaire, in-depth one-on-one student interviews, and documentation review.

The overarching research question of this study is: What are the contributing factors of persistence for Southeast Asian American community college students? To address this question the following driving questions will be examined in this study:

1) What academic factors contributed to the Southeast Asian American students' decision to attend and persist in community college?

2) What co-curricular factors contribute to the persistence of Southeast Asian American students?

3) What role does family contribute to the persistence of Southeast Asian American students?

4) What role does campus personnel and faculty contribute to the persistence of Southeast Asian American students?

Research Design

In the realm of professional research, there are two major methods that are employed: quantitative and qualitative. Both are systematic forms of research but the two approaches have its distinctions. Quantitative research usually involves large sample sizes in which the findings are analyzed numerically. Theories are tested out in quantitative research and is said to be deductive. Whereas qualitative research often involves a smaller sample and theories are often extracted from the results of a qualitative research study. And because of this nature, qualitative research is said to be inductive. There is still relatively minimal research on Southeast Asian American students and so an interpretive qualitative research design will be applied to this study to further investigate the educational experience and persistence of these students.

Shank (2002) defined qualitative research as "a form of systematic empirical inquiry into meaning" (p. 5). By systematic he means "planned, ordered and public", following rules agreed upon by members of the qualitative research community. Shank (2002) referred to "empirical" as the type of inquiry is grounded in the world of experience. Denzin and Lincoln (2000) claimed that qualitative research involves an interpretive and naturalistic approach: "This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or to interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them" (p. 3). It is for this reason that the researcher tried to create a comfortable environment for the participant during the interview process. The researcher made a point to hold the interviews in a neutral location on campus such as a room within a library or a room inside student club office to help create comfortable and familiar atmosphere for the student.

Merriam (2002) asserted the basic interpretive qualitative research study embodies all of the characteristics of qualitative research and asserts that a major aspect of qualitative research is

that individuals construct reality in interaction with their social worlds. Thus, constructionism underlies basic interpretive qualitative research study (Merriam, 2002). A researcher is interested in understanding the meaning a phenomenon has for those involved in this particular qualitative method. Because there is little published on the collegiate experiences of Southeast Asian American students, examining how these students understand and interact with their world and how their interaction and understanding affects their academic experiences is imperative to figuring out what contributes to their persistence. According to Merriam (2002), meaning is constructed rather than discovered by the human beings involved as they engage in the world they are interpreting. While both phenomenology and symbolic interactionism centers on interpretive qualitative analysis, in phenomenology, a researcher studies how people interpret everyday experiences from the perspective of the meaning it has for them. As a result, a researcher attempts to gain access into the conceptual world of the subjects through what is emphasized in order to understand how and what meaning they construct around events in their daily lives (Merriam, 2002). In the interpretive qualitative method, the researcher attempts to replace herself in the place of the participant to gain a perspective of that other person (Crotty, 1998, p. 76, cited in Merriam, 2002).

Merriam (2002) discussed the transformation of people in the interactive process and argues that people can change and grow. Consequently, individuals construct a sense of self as they interact with others. Bogdan and Biklen (1998) argued the defining of the self is constructed when people attempt to see themselves as others view them by interpreting gestures and actions directed towards them and by placing themselves in the role of the other person. In the same vein as Merriam, Bogdan & Biklen (1998) further stated the human experience is mediated by interpretation. Furthermore, they continue to state that meaning is conferred on

objects, people, situations, and events; rather than possessing their own meaning. It is with the help of others in an individual's life, does an individual interpret and construct meaning. Family, friends, neighbors, schoolmates, colleagues, television personalities are just a few examples of people individuals interact with and can help him/her construct meaning. For this reason, the researcher was particularly interested in the asking the participants about their interaction with family members and faculty and personnel on their community college campus.

To conduct an interpretive qualitative study, Merriam (2002) stated that there are three basic areas a researcher would be interested in: 1) how people interpret their experiences, 2) how they construct their worlds and 3) what meaning they attribute to their experiences. According to Merriam (2002), the general purpose of a basic interpretive study is to achieve an understanding of how people make sense of their lives and their experiences. Other types of qualitative studies can be found in applied fields of practices; yet, the basic interpretive qualitative study is probably most common in education (Merriam, 2002). Common frameworks that a researcher may draw upon in an interpretive study of education practice are concepts, models, and theories in educational psychology, developmental psychology, cognitive psychology or sociology (Merriam, 2002). Thus, the face-to-face interviews in this study were important in figuring out how people verbalize and express their experiences in the community college and the researcher analyzed the participants' responses to the guiding questions carefully.

Merriam (2002) recommends that in an interpretive qualitative study data collection can be through interviews, observations, or document analysis. The data collection for this interpretive qualitative study will consisted of one hour face-to-face interviews, and if necessary a follow-up interview, with each of the participants. Through this method, an in-depth picture can be captured of each participant's life and academic experience. Student questionnaires and

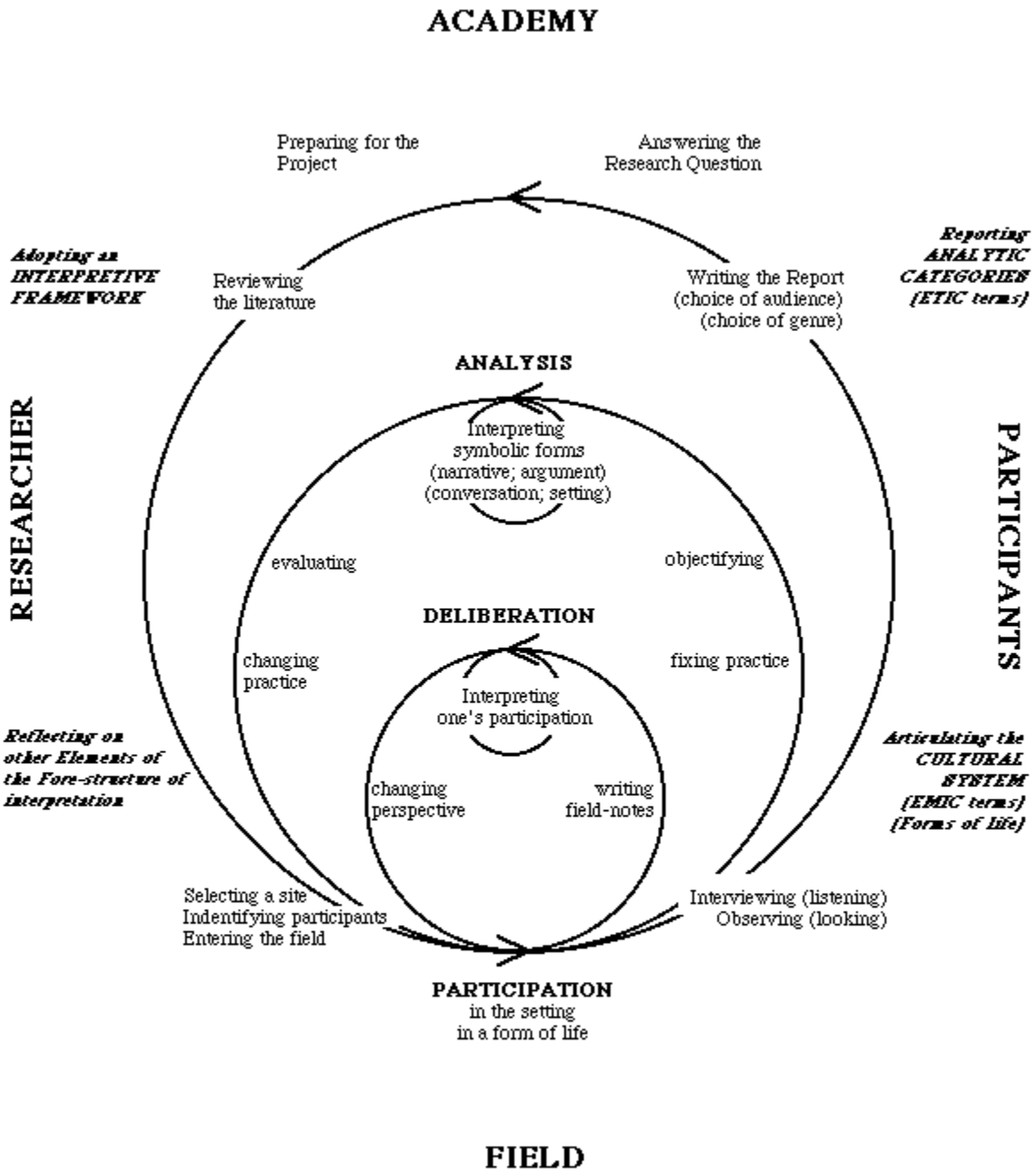
in-depth interviews were used to gather the data; while the qualitative aspect helped to further illuminate the subject because the personal narratives of the students are essential in gaining insight into their experiences. For this study, the personal narratives were obtained by open-ended questions asked through individual in-depth interviews. Merriam (2002) argued that the concept behind the qualitative research rests on the perception that meaning is socially constructed by the interaction of individuals with their world. Thus, the analysis of personal narratives and responses to survey and interview questions will help to achieve a deeper understanding of these students' collegiate experiences.

Packer (2012) stated, "Interpretive inquiry aims to characterize how people experience the world, the ways they interact together, and the setting in which these interactions take place." Packer also (2012) described interpretive research as an "approach to research in the human sciences that recognizes the paradigmatic character of all research" (par. 2). He referred to Thomas Kuhn's (1962), *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions,* to explain the paradigmatic nature of interpretive inquiry. Kuhn (1969) recognized that any research method depends on epistemological and ontological assumption of the nature of knowledge and about the kinds of entity that exist; Packer (2012) asserted that interpretive research rests on those epistemological and ontological and methodological assumptions. Interpretive inquiry is hermeneutic in character and therefore, can be descriptive and explanatory (Packer, 2012).

Figure 1 is a modification of the Packer's diagram of the interpretive inquiry process during data collection. There are two circles that intersect. The outermost circle represents analysis of the data obtained. Evaluating, objectifying and interpreting symbolic forms of the data are part of this circular process. The inner-most circle represents deliberation of the data and it intersects with the outer circle of analysis at the point of participation because the researcher is

an active part of the research because he/she brings meaning to data. Within the deliberation circle is interpreting one's participation, writing field-notes and changing perspective.

Figure 1. *Packer's Diagram of the Interpretive Inquiry Process*



Data Collection Procedure

Site and participation selection. The focus of this study is on Southeast Asian American students in Illinois community colleges. As a result, homogenous and purposeful sampling was used to determine the sites and participants for the study. Patton (2001) defined homogenous sampling as the selection of a small sample that has similar characteristics with the purpose of describing some particular subgroup in depth. In other words, homogenous sampling allows for the profound study of a particular group. In this study, Southeast Asian American students in Illinois community colleges were purposely sought after. The researcher referred to the Illinois Community College Board website to provide demographic information of institution to search for institutions that are comprised of at least 3% of Asians in all geographic regions of Illinois: urban, suburban and rural. Because the percentage of Asians was too small in rural community colleges, the researcher contacted community colleges in urban and suburban areas of Illinois.

Careful consideration of the current rise in Asian American student enrollment in the community colleges of the Midwest and the demographic composition of Illinois led to the decision to perform the study in the community colleges of this state. The resolution was to conduct the study in Illinois and to target Southeast Asian American students was the result of homogenous and purposeful sampling. Both types of sampling are just two of many of effective sampling strategies where the participants and sites are selected with a particular purpose or goal in mind (Patton 2001). Crabtree (2006) defined homogenous sampling as the process of selecting a small group of subjects or units with similar characteristics for examination and analysis in order to understand and describe a particular group in depth. Purposeful sampling occurs when the researcher identifies and locates specific characteristics of a certain population

to study (Johnson and Christiansen, 2008). Because of the significant increase of Asian American students enrolled in the Midwestern community colleges, the community colleges of the urban, suburban and rural areas Illinois were studied.

Recently, more light has been shed on the hidden plight of Southeast Asian American students and the significant rise of Asian American and Pacific Islanders in community colleges. In their report "Asian American and Pacific Islanders: Facts, Not Fiction: Setting the Record Straight," the Commission on Asian American and Pacific Islander Research in Education (CARE) and the College Board (2008) drew attention to the misperception that Asian American and Pacific Islanders are most likely to attend a private four-year institution. They revealed a greater number of Asian American and Pacific Islanders attend public institutions, and in some states like California and Nevada, over half of these students attend a public community college. Moreover, the number of Asian American and Pacific Islander students attending community college is increasing at a faster rate than four-year institutions (CARE, 2008). Furthermore, there has been a dramatic increase of Asian American students in the community colleges, especially the Southern and Midwestern regions of the U.S. (CARE, 2008). CARE (2008) reveals that between 1999 and 2000, community college enrollment by Asian American and Pacific Islanders increased by 86% in the South and 75.2% in the Midwest, compared to 56.4% in the West and 59.3% in the Northeast.

Therefore, the community colleges of Illinois and its Chicagoland area were chosen as the sample sites for this study. Chicago, outside of California and the East Coast, is the primary destination for Asian immigrants (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000). The Chicago metro area comprises of 3.9 % Asian American population and ranks seventh out of the top ten

cities with the most Asian Americans (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000). To ensure purposeful and homogenous sampling, the criteria for site selection were followed:

- The community college must be in the urban, suburban and rural regions of Illinois.
- An urban or suburban community college must comprise of a Southeast Asian American student population of three percent or greater.
- A rural community college must comprise of at least a two percent South-Asian American population.

The participation of two to three community colleges in each geographic area of Illinois was the goal of the researcher.

The criteria for the participant selection are as follows:

- be a part-time or full-time student in an urban, suburban or rural Illinois community college
- be U.S. citizen or permanent resident
- be of Southeast Asian American descent with an accumulation of at least 20 credits or be an ABE/ESL student in the institution for at least two semesters

A target range of five to ten participants from each participating college was the goal of the researcher.

The definition of an urban, suburban and rural area was characterized by U.S. Census Bureau. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, a population and housing units located within an urbanized area (UA) or an urban cluster (UC) which consists of core census block groups or blocks that have a population density of at least 1,000 people per square mile and surrounding census blocks that have an overall density of at least 500 people per square mile. In addition,

under certain conditions, less densely settled territory may be part of each UA or UC. An urbanized area is an area consisting of 50,000 or more people. An urbanized cluster is an area of under 50,000 people. A rural area is all territory, population and housing located outside of UAs and UCs. The U.S. Census does not define the term suburb. Therefore, for the sake of simplicity, Merriam-Webster's (2010) definition of suburb was used, which defines a suburb as a smaller community adjacent to or within commuting distance of a city.

Instrumentation and/or Interview Protocol

Participation in the study was voluntary. Individual interviews were conducted face-to-face using open-ended questions to obtain data. All interviewees were asked the same open-ended questions. All interviews took place in a neutral location and tape-recorded and later transcribed. The tape-recorded interviews, interview transcriptions and research data will be stored in a secure and locked area for five years. Interviewees were given an opportunity to review the transcript and make changes if deemed necessary. In addition, demographic questionnaires were used to gather information on the participant's educational background and goals, family of origin, parents' educational background, language acquisition, and other personal characteristics.

Document Review

Documentation obtained from each of the community college website, student handbook and college annual report were used in this study. These documents were used to gain a better understanding of the college's population, environment and programming for the participants' in the study.

Limitations

There were several limitations to this study. The first limitation was that all the community colleges in the study are only in Illinois. Second, the study was limited to only students of Southeast-Asian descent as captured within the community colleges of the Midwest. Also, since participation for the study was voluntary, the original population may be reduced in size. Third, the sample size may be too small to make generalizations for the larger population. Fourth, the aggregate data or phenomenon of combining all Asian Americans in the majority of research and literature may have caused challenges in identifying students as Southeast Asian American and/or Pacific Islander with the highest degree of accuracy. Lastly, the researcher is of Southeast-Asian descent and has a personal connection to the struggles of this particular group of people. However, the researcher attempted to be as objective as possible given the circumstances and made all efforts to overcome any prejudice and bias that may have arose.

Assumptions

This study made assumptions that must be recognized. The first assumption was that the participants responded honestly to questions asked of them. The next assumption was the instruments used for coding were accurate. The last assumption is that there was a large enough population of Southeast Asian American among the Asian American student population in the sample site locations to participate in the study.

Data Analysis Procedures

This study utilized many procedures to analyze the data. Lincoln and Guba (1985) described the interpretation of data as "lessons learned" because it involves making sense of the data. One method used to analyze data is termed by Cresswell (2008) as the "Data Analysis Spiral" of qualitative research. In this method, Cresswell (2008) starts with the gathering of data,

and moves into data management, the importance of writing, reading, reflecting, and memoing, then on to the skill of describing, classifying, and interpreting, categorizing, and comparing, and finally, representing and visualizing the data. This data analysis techniques moves in a circular and several aspects of analyzing are touched rather than in fixed linear approach. This process consists of repetitively moving circularly from reading and memoing loop to the describing, classifying and interpreting loop to the coding or category loop. According to Cresswell (2008), the coding loop is the heart of qualitative data analysis because the researcher will describe in detail, develop themes through a classification system and provide an interpretation through either a personal perspectives or perspectives found in literature.

In applying Cresswell's "Data Analysis Spiral" technique, the contributing factors of persistence and the setting were described, which were the community college campuses the participants attend. The setting description cannot merely be the location of the college, but it must encompass a wider area that could possibly exceed the boundaries of the community or campus. For example, the campus and the demographics of the college were not only described, but the school's location and community demographic were also described.

Validity and Trustworthiness of Research

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), the value of a research lies within its trustworthiness, which involves establishing the four following criteria:

- Credibility
- Transferability
- Dependability
- Confirmability

Credibility is the confidence in the accuracy of the findings. Transferability is demonstrating that the findings are applicable in other contexts. Dependability is demonstrating the findings are consistent and can be repeated. Confirmability is the extent of neutrality within the findings; the findings are not influenced by the researcher bias, motivation or interest but are inherent to the participants.

For this research, many steps were performed to help ensure trustworthiness of the data. First, peer auditors were utilized to verify trustworthiness and accuracy of the collection and analysis of data. Second, in an effort to collect the most open and honest responses from participants, a conscious effort was made to gain the trust of each participant by giving each participant ample time to adjust to the interview setting and procedure and minimize interruptions to interview as much as possible.

Also, an interview protocol of a set of open-ended questions was asked. However, the participants were encouraged to volunteer any other thoughts and feelings about their educational experiences if they wish to do so. In addition, member-checking of interviews was used to validate the accuracy of interviews and whether analysis of data accurately reflects participants' thoughts and feelings. The interviews were recorded, transcribed verbatim and stored in a secure and locked area for five years. Transcriptions of interviews were sent to participants for verification.

Another method that will be used is triangulation to analyze and cross-validate data. According to Gay and Airasian (2000) triangulation is an important and powerful method of establishing the credibility of a qualitative research study. It is a type of cross-validation that seeks to find commonalities in the data by comparing different participants, settings and methods to identify recurring results (Gay and Airasian, p. 252, 2000). In addition, Lincoln and Guba

(1985) proposed the techniques of triangulation of data sources, methods, and investigators to establish credibility. Triangulation is defined to be "a validity procedure where researchers search for convergence among multiple and different sources of information to form themes or categories in a study" (Creswell & Miller, 2000, p. 126). Triangulation is typically a strategy (test) for improving the validity and reliability of research or evaluation of findings. Mathison (1988) elaborated on triangulation:

> Triangulation has risen an important methodological issue in naturalistic and qualitative approaches to evaluation [in order to] control bias and establishing valid propositions because traditional scientific techniques are incompatible with this alternate epistemology. (p. 13)

The triangulation in this research was manifested in the four community college sites that participated in this study and all colleges confirmed themes in the findings.

Researcher as the Tool/Instrument

Merriam (2009) asserted that a major characteristic of qualitative research is the researcher as the primary instrument for the collection of data, analyzing the data and presenting the findings. The final findings of research are guided by the construct of the researcher which is comprised the researcher's prior knowledge and experience. Therefore, the reader should be aware of the researcher's background, experiences and expertise in the field.

The researcher was motivated to pursue research on Southeast Asian American and Pacific Island students because she also fits in the ethnic category. She and her parents are war refugees from Cambodia and they immigrated to the United States in the early 1980's; the researcher was just a little over one month old. Her parents instilled in her and her siblings the value of education and always emphasized how it is the key to the door of opportunities and a

good life. Witnessing the struggles of her parents as they worked hard to provide the best life they could for their children fueled the researcher's desire to achieve for her parents and herself at a young age and thus, the researcher's life has revolved around education, personally and professionally.

Her career in higher education began shortly after graduating with her bachelor's degree in English when she was hired as science and English tutor at her community college. The part-time tutoring job led her to being to being hired into supervisory position in the tutoring center which confirmed her passion for working with students and helping them reach their academic goals. She continued to work in the community college for eight years in a variety of capacities, including tutor coordinator, workforce development coordinator, and English composition and ESL adjunct instructor. In this time, the researcher earned her master's degree in English studies. She has since moved on to being director of a learning resource center at a private four-year university for nearly four years. In her years of working with students, she has had the opportunity to work and serve an array of students of diverse backgrounds and challenges. She hopes to attain many more years of experience helping students, especially under-served students, achieve their educational goals. It is important to note that, although, the researcher has a personal understanding of the participants' experiences she remained as unbiased as possible throughout the study.

Summary

This study investigated exploring factors of persistence among Illinois Southeast Asian American community college students. It utilized an interpretive qualitative research design so that a deeper understanding of this particular group's collegiate experience can be gained. Students were asked to share their experiences in community college through a questionnaire and

one-on-one interviews. A few limitations include the fact the study is only limited to the community colleges of Illinois, the sample size may be too small to make generalizations for the larger group and the challenge of the recognizing Southeast Asian American students for participants due to aggregate demographic data available.

In addition to limitations, assumptions include the fact that the participants are honest with their responses during the questionnaire and interview process, the coding instruments are accurate and there is a large enough population of Southeast Asian American among the Asian American student population in the sample site locations to participate in the study. Also, purposeful and homogeneous sampling were used to carefully identify relevant participants and sites for the study. After the data was collected, analysis and coding of data were implemented to interpret data and help to find emerging themes. To establish and maintain trustworthiness of the data a peer review of question protocol and data analysis were performed. In addition, procedures such as member checking, narratives of thick and rich description, and triangulation were utilized to further strengthen trustworthiness of the study.

Chapter four will present the findings of the study.

Chapter 4: Data Findings and Analysis

Introduction

The purpose of this research was to explore the contributing factors of persistence among Southeast Asian American community college students. Therefore, a qualitative case study methodology was employed to obtain a better understanding of how participants connect their experiences to motivate them to pursue and persist in their higher education (Merriam, 2009). The results of qualitative research are descriptive, rather than predictive providing insight on a subject matter. The strength of qualitative research lies in its ability to provide rich textual description of how people experience a given research issue (Merriam, 2009). Furthermore, it provides the "human" side of an issue, which are often contradictory behaviors and beliefs and it also helps identify intangible factors such as socioeconomic status, gender roles, social norms, ethnicity and religion that may be affecting the research issue. Data collection elements for this research consist of:

- online demographic survey
- interview questions
- document review

The utilization of multiple sources of information constitutes triangulation of the data. Through data analysis, a priori themes and recurring themes were identified, allowing for the discovery of patterns among the participants.

Site Selection Profiles

This study involved studying Southeast Asian American community college students in Illinois. The criteria for site selection are as follows: a community college in either the urban or suburban regions of Illinois and comprises a Southeast Asian American student population of

three percent or greater. There were four institutions involved, two suburban and two urban community colleges. The following are descriptive profiles of community college that partook in the study. This information is illustrated in Table 1 and 2.

Flint College. The first college, Flint College, is a suburban community college and is located about just under 20 miles from downtown Chicago. The institution sits on over 100 acres of land and houses 18 facilities. It is a comprehensive community college offering over 130 degree and certificate programs. The institution's student population is racially and ethnically diverse and serves over 13,000 students each semester. As of fall 2014, 28 percent of their students were full-time, while 72 percent were part-time. Fifty-six percent of the students were female and 44 percent were male. The ethnicity breakdown of the student population is as follows:

- 34 percent White
- 33 percent Hispanic
- 17 percent African-American
- 3 percent Asian
- 0 percent Native American
- 13 percent No Response

Amber College. The second community college, Amber College is located about 50 miles from downtown Chicago and boasts three campuses. Nearly 13,000 students are enrolled in the institution. Fifty-nine percent of students are between 18-24 years of age, and the average age for student is 26 years old. Full-time students comprised of 24.3 percent of the student population, while 75.7% were part-time. The ethnicity breakdown of the student population is as follows:

- 50.7 percent White

- 27.6 percent Hispanic
- 7.5 percent African-American
- 5.9 percent Asian
- 0.3 percent Native American
- 7.6 percent No Response

Slate College. Slate College is an urban community college that resides in Chicago that is located about 11 miles from downtown Chicago. Over 12,000 students enrolled at Slate College annually. Fifty-nine percent of the students are female, while 40.6% percent are male. Furthermore, about 38% of the students are attending full-time. The ethnicity breakdown of the student population is as follows:

- 23.4 percent White
- 56.5 percent Hispanic
- 9.4 percent African-American
- 6.7 percent Asian
- 0.3 percent Native American
- 2.7 percent No Response
- 0.1 percent Non-resident

Granite College. Granite College is the second urban community college in the study is located about 10 miles from downtown Chicago. The total enrollment is over 10,000. Male students comprise of 41.6% and female students comprise of 58.4% of the student population. The ethnicity breakdown of the student population is as follows:

- 19.6 percent White
- 39.6 percent Hispanic

- 23.6 percent African-American
- 13.3 percent Asian
- 0.3 percent Native American
- 2.3 percent Unknown

Table 1

Site Selection Ethnicity Profiles

	Flint College	Amber College	Slate College	Granite College
White	34%	50.7%	23.4%	19.6%
Hispanic	33%	27.6%	56.5%	39.6%
African-American	17%	7.5%	9.4%	23.6%
Asian	3%	5.9%	6.7%	13.3%
Native American	0%	0.3%	0.3%	0.3%
No Response	13%	7.6%	2.7%	—
Non-Resident	—	—	0.1%	—
Unknown	—	—	—	2.3%

Table 2

Site Selection General Characteristics

	Flint College	Amber College	Slate College	Granite College
Geographic Type	Suburban	Suburban	Urban	Urban
Distance from Downtown Chicago	20 mi.	50 mi.	11 mi.	10 mi.
Number of Campuses	—	3	—	—
Acreage	100 acres	—	—	—
Number of Facilities	18	—	—	—
Number of Degree and Certificate Programs	130	—	—	—
Total Enrollment	13,000	13,000	12,000	10,000
Average Age of Students	—	26 yrs.	—	—
Percentage of students:				
Aged 18-24	—	59%	—	—
Full-time	28%	24.3%	38%	—
Part-time	72%	75.7%	62%	—
Females	56%	—	59%	58.4%
Males	44%	—	40.6%	41.6%

Participant Selection Profile

Contact protocol. According to Yin (2009) a contact protocol provides credibility, dependability and confirmability to the findings of study. For this study, a multi-approach and purposeful sampling was implemented to select community colleges and student participants. Purposeful sampling was utilized to focus on people with particular characteristics who can provide a deeper insight on questions of a research study. In this study, the criteria for the participant selection are as follows: be a part-time or full-time student in an urban or suburban Illinois community college, be U.S. citizen or permanent resident and be of Southeast Asian American descent with an accumulation of 20 credits or more or be an ABE/ESL student in the institution for at least two semesters.

Research Findings

The participants engaged in a web survey to obtain background demographic information and a semi-structured interview regarding each participant's learning experience at his/her respective community college. The interviews were conducted at the students' college campus. Prior to the interview, each participant signed a consent form agreeing to participate in the study and interview. One hour was set aside for each interview to give time for the participant to answer the questions in the web survey and for the researcher to ask questions and probe deeper as needed. The following will be a summary of the participants' responses per institution.

Flint College

Student survey responses. The following table, Table 3, displays the demographic information of the student participants at Flint College. There are three individuals, aged 20-24 years, two female and one male. All of the individual are U.S. citizens; however, the first female participant was born in Vietnam and immigrated to the U.S. at age 17, while the other two

participants were born in the U.S. All three have declared a major. The first female participant is pursuing a clinical laboratory sciences degree. The second participant is pursuing a nursing degree. Lastly, the third participant is pursuing an accounting degree. Table 4 provides a summary of the participants' responses to the interview questions.

Table 3

Flint College Student Demographic Survey Results

	Student 1	Student 2	Student 3
Gender	Female	Male	Female
Age	23	24	20
Ethnic Identity	Vietnamese	Filipino	Filipina
Citizenship Status	Citizen	Citizen	Citizen
Birthplace	Vietnam	U.S.	U.S.
Major or Field of Interest	Clinical Laboratory Science	Nursing	Accounting

Student interview responses.

Table 4

Flint College Student Response to Interview Questions

Student 1	Student 2	Student 3
Q1. Why did you choose this college?		
I heard it was "a pretty good college" and since tuition is cheap, I can save money to transfer to 4-year institution later.	The college is "two minutes" from my house and I won a scholarship.	Decided to attend Flint because my cousin was already attending Flint College and because of a scholarship program.
Q2. What subjects are you most and least interested in?		
Most interested in human biology because it's related to major and least interested in psychology because I dislike writing papers.	Most interested in microbiology and least interested in ethics because the teacher didn't captivate my attention.	Most interested in math and least interested in the sciences
Q3. What do you hope to accomplish while studying at this college?		
I hope to complete my associate's degree and then transfer to a four-year university.	Complete my degree and make my parents proud.	I hope to achieve an A average and transfer to a four-year university.
Q4. Are you involved in co-curricular activities and what has motivated you to get involved?		
No, I'm not involved but if I could, I would participate in any activity that involves helping others, like tutoring biology or math.	Not really involved; was involved in Future Nurses Association for a time, but I'm no longer involved.	I'm attending Flint because I'm part of a scholars program that pays for my tuition. In addition, I'm a member of the accounting club for the extra credit my professor promised for participating and Phi Theta Kappa which offers scholarships.
Q5. If you're involved, what aspects of being involved do you like the most?		
—	—	Although, I'm a member of clubs, I'm not really active.

Table 4 (continued)

Student 1	Student 2	Student 3
Q6. If you're not involved, what is preventing you from participating?		
No, because I work full-time as a nail technician and mother's nail salon.	Co-curricular activities are too time-consuming and I need a lot of time to devote to studies.	Time conflict with studies
Q7. Is your family/spouse supportive of your education? Why or why not?		
Yes, family is supportive by giving me time to attend classes and reassuring me that, "they would do…anything for me to be attending school" and "they'd probably never let me quit this school."	Moral support: "…When I'm struggling, I'll be telling them, "Oh, I think I'm gonna fail," and they're like, "No, you're not." You know, "That's just in your mind, why don't you, you know, just, just leave it in God, God's hand, and uh, he'll take care of it..." Also, rewards for milestones I've accomplished.	Mom calls me every day for moral support from the Philippines and I live with my aunt in the U.S. who supports me financially.
Q8. Do you have family members who have attended college and have they assisted in your education? How?		
No, I'm the first in my family to attend college.	I have a sister in college and she supports with "words of encouragement."	My sister is attending college in the Philippines and also, my cousin attends Flint and she helped me to apply and register for classes.

Table 4 (continued)

Student 1	Student 2	Student 3
Q9. What is the highest level of education of your parent? How has your parents' education affected your education goals?		
High school in Vietnam and my mother advised me to seek out a higher education so I can support myself.	Both parents completed bachelor's degree in Philippines, and I feel the pressure of my parents' and relatives' expectations for me to complete my degree since many of my family members have completed theirs. "I have to get, on that level where they want me to be, so like I have to make them proud… because, at times I didn't want to go to school, and…to know what my parents really want for me, and what they expect from me makes me want to strive for higher."	My mother earned her bachelor's degree in the Philippines; my father was not present in her childhood. My mother constantly gives me moral and verbal support.
Q10. How comfortable are you seeking help from campus personnel, such as counselors, deans, club advisors, etc.?		
Comfortable—especially with advisors since they are "really easy to get in touch" and "because they know me" since she is a first-generation student	Comfortable enough, but I try to navigate on my own	Comfortable
Q11. How often and for what reason do you talk to campus personnel?		
At least once a week, especially at the start of the semester	Once a year, with the nursing program counselor	Sometimes—twice to three times a semester but usually when I have a question, I will search for the answer "first online, before going to the counselor."

Table 4 (continued)

Student 1	Student 2	Student 3
Q12. If you need assistance with your studies, financial aid or personal issues, who do you seek out on campus?		
I go to the tutoring center frequently to get assistance on essays and I also receive support from my advisors from the TRiO program.	I don't really seek out campus personnel or faculty. I turn to my classmates first because, "they're always there for me, supporting me, um... the people in the same program as me. Um, and then, I go to the teachers."	I am close to my TRiO advisor and I feel close to her because, "She's very approachable, when I need help." Also, my advisor's father is also Filipino.
Q13. Do you belong to a program on campus that provides academic/mentoring support? If yes, what program and what type of support?		
Yes, she is a student of the TRiO program which provides advising and mentoring	No	Yes, mentoring program from the scholars program and TRiO
Q14. How often and for what reason(s) do you talk to your professor outside of class?		
Every time I don't know or understand something, I will talk to my professors	Not often- seek classmates first	Every day, after class
Q15. How comfortable do you feel seeking help from your professor when needed?		
"I'm pretty comfy about (seeking help from professors) because…most of them….(are) really nice and really understandable."	Not as comfortable as peers	Comfortable
Q16. How productive is your interaction with your professors when you meet them?		
When I have a question, my professors "actually understand it, and they actually help me out…. of the situation."	—	Productive-especially with my math professor who I can email and discuss problems with in person

Amber College

Student survey responses. The following table, Table 5, displays the demographic information of the student participants at Amber College. There are four individuals, three females and one male. All of the female participants completed the web survey; however, due to technical difficulties with the computer, the male participant was unable to complete the survey. All of the female participants are individual were born in the U.S. and thus, are American citizens. All three have declared a major. The first female participant is pursuing a physical therapy degree. The second participant is pursuing a sociology degree. Lastly, the third participant is pursuing an international studies degree. Table 6 provides a summary of the participants' responses to the interview questions.

Table 5

Amber College Student Demographic Survey Results

	Student 1	Student 2	Student 3	Student 4
Gender	Female	Female	Male	Female
Age	21	21	—	21
Ethnic Identity	Filipina	Filipina	Filipino	Malay
Citizenship Status	Citizen	Citizen	—	Citizen
Birthplace	U.S.	U.S.	—	U.S.
Major or Field of Interest	Physical Therapy	Sociology	—	International Studies

Student interview responses.

Table 6

Amber College Student Response to Interview Questions

Student 1	Student 2	Student 3	Student 4
Q1. Why did you choose this college?			
Reverse transfer from four-year university in the city and said it was "it was kind of tough going, travelling from home and then going to the city." "And to save a little bit more money, just so I can go, um, back to... a university, 'cause I have to get my doctorate."	Initially, I was set on attending four-year university but ended up attending Amber College because I was still not sure about my major.	I spent two years at a four year university after graduating high school. I earned a scholarship to the university and was pursuing pre-medicine. However, I couldn't keep a high enough GPA to keep the scholarship and although, my parents helped me to continue my education there, "but eventually I just found it unfulfilling that I, I found it not worth the money, because I, I didn't want to be a doctor." So I decided to take a semester off, returned home and by summer I enrolled into Amber College out of convenience and cost. "It was affordable…and in that perspective… I could still be undecided and explore education classes without wasting money."	I choose this college because "it's cheap and I live, like, two miles away. In addition, I didn't want to incur debt and since I also receive financial aid, the school, "paid me…to go to school here because I also got some scholarships too because I have a pretty good GPA."

Table 6 (continued)

Student 1	Student 2	Student 3	Student 4
Q2. What subjects are you most and least interested in?			
Most interested in anatomy and physiology because, "I've never taken, um, a class like that in high school, or any time in my life, so um, it's really interesting to know." Least interested in statistics because, "It's really boring."	I took a lot of dance classes my first semester here because I was late registering and I really enjoyed it because I love dancing. However, my parents don't approve of the performing arts. I'm looking forward to my only biology class, environmental science, because of the field trip. I'm not looking forward to logic which involves a lot of math and I'm not strong in math.	Although, I dread the work, I enjoy my math classes most because they're so straightforward and an answer. On the other hand, I'm not looking forward to my philosophy and history classes which often don't have one right answer.	I really like learning foreign languages because it's closely related to my international business major. I also enjoyed women's studies classes because I grew up in a household full of four boys. I really dislike math classes because "I'm horrible at math classes despite the stereotype that Asians are good at math."

Table 6 (continued)

Student 1	Student 2	Student 3	Student 4
Q3. What do you hope to accomplish while studying at this college?			
I want to complete "the heavy load of classes and homework" because my first year at Stone University "was really, really easy" because I took general education classes that I had already taken my senior of high school. So attending Amber college and taking mostly science classes needed for my major is "pretty hard core" and "tough."	"I absolutely hated coming here at the beginning." I just wanted to complete my general education classes and get out. Then I got comfortable here because a lot of my friends also attend classes here. I also met my boyfriend/best friend here "and he just made me feel more comfortable here, and everything, so... it was a, easy transition, from high school to here, to be honest with you".	The goal I had for coming here was to get back on track and "really discover where I was supposed to be."	I want to complete my general education classes and to take some classes in International Business and figure out whether or not I really liked that major before transferring to a four-year university. "I want to make sure before I went (sic) to a four-year institution and pick a major, that I knew exactly what I want to do because that's kind of what I went here for as well because I didn't know exactly what I wanted to do."

Table 6 (continued)

Student 1	Student 2	Student 3	Student 4
Q4. Are you involved in co-curricular activities and what has motivated you to get involved?			
I wasn't too involved my first year; I was mostly a student worker at the on-campus daycare "which I absolutely loved." This year I am involved in the Asian Student Alliance and I'm the vice-president. We "dedicate ourselves to… educating the school, and outside of school, in our communities about…our Asian culture" and give back to the community and overseas such as raising money for charities like battered women's safe house and schools in the Philippines. I'm involved because I'm obviously Filipina and I wanted to return to getting involved in school activities again because "I did a lot of charity events in my high school, so I just wanted to get back into… doing stuff for my school and my community." I felt like something was "missing" in my life because I was really into studying, and all that stuff last year so I became involved again to "balance my time."	At first, I didn't want to get involved in anything but then my sister (student 1), encouraged me to join Asian Student Alliance. Also, I already knew everyone in the club. I ran for public relations officer, because I'd always wanted to do something like that in high school and I won the position. I wasn't running for a position for a second year but my friend called me one day and said he needed me to be public relations officer again. So I've been on ASA for two years now and it's been fun. Also, my first year, I was part of Emerging Leaders, which is a weekend long conference held in Wisconsin that focuses on teaching freshman and transferring students' leadership skills	Yes, I'm involved and I have always been very involved in school activities. In high school, my parents were always afraid that my involvement would interfere with my studies, but "I found the more that I was involved in high school, the better my grades were." So, naturally I continued to be involved in college. At the four-year university, I was involved in my cultural clubs and stereotypically, I headed a lot of dance groups. When I went to my first organizational fair at Amber College, Asian Student Alliance (presented themselves as):"We're not just a club, we're a family, and we're also your peers, we're here to help you." I'm a member of the Asian Student Alliance and for a year, I was the president.	I'm not really involved. I went to a couple of Asian Student Alliance meetings…but it was geared toward just like a bunch of people hanging out so I work instead.

Table 6 (continued)

Student 1	Student 2	Student 3	Student 4
Q5. If you're involved, what aspects of being involved do you like the most?			
Being involved definitely helped me to "meet a lot of people. Um, especially if this is like your first year at a, at a different school, like especially a college. I know it, it's sometimes intimidating... Getting involved is, very crucial" for the first year of college "but…for any year really…And you, you get connections, you network a lot... you get a lot of feedback."	I really enjoy organizing events to raise money for charitable causes and budgeting money for future events. I like giving back to the community and helping others. Also, events like "our Culture Fusion in, in fall semester, that really like, opens people's eyes up, there's a lot of diversity in our school."	I enjoy organizing fund-raising events the most. "It really brings out the best of people…it's heartwarming, in the end…At these events you see this club become a community."	—
Q6. If you're not involved, what is preventing you from participating?			
—	—	—	I work a part- time job, about 20 hours a week.

Student 1	Student 2	Student 3	Student 4
Q7. Is your family/spouse supportive of your education? Why or why not?			
My parents are supportive about school but "it was kind of tough growing up." They were always insisting that we all go to nursing school, but it wasn't something we wanted to do. Now my mom has "kind of gave up on that, dream for us" because "we're grown up now, we can make decisions for ourselves" and "we're learning new things, that she hasn't, so it's opening new doors for us." The support from my parents is usually verbal and if they don't like something, "they will question it a lot" which "brings me down" and it "makes me question… if my parents aren't liking it…why should I do it."	Yes, but my parents really pushed my siblings and me to the medical field and that's not what I'm interested in. "I just can't do, science or math, cannot do it….I feel like, if I don't, like I'm disappointing them, but, in a way, I need to do this for myself, because if I know I can't do it now, I can't do it later." So my parents support me in everything except my dancing.	Yes, my parents and grandmother who also lived with us are supportive of my education. They raised us with idea that education is number one priority. "No girlfriends, no boyfriends…till you get out of college, till you graduate."	Yes, my mom is supportive but "she's hard (on me) but I know she loves me, but she's definitely, like, kind of the stereotypical Asian mom. My mom also helps me when I need financial support.

Table 6 (continued)

Student 1	Student 2	Student 3	Student 4
Q8. Do you have family members who have attended college and have they assisted in your education? How?			
Yes. My older sister is in Dakota College and she helped me on my papers. My brother who just graduated from Porter University and he helps me with all my technology and computer issues. I have a twin sister and she attends Amber College too.	Yes, my older sister attended Amber College and then transferred to Pebble University. So she helped me to register for classes and my boyfriend's brother also helped me find classes I needed and I even took a class with him.	I have a younger sister who also attends Amber College and so I'm more of a mentor to her. However, she reminds me that I have to set a good example for her and that keeps me on track with what I have to do in school to graduate.	Yes, "I have four brothers. One of them just graduated from State University, he's an engineer right now." My brothers and I aren't close so they don't really help me with college. I really just rely on myself for answers. "I'm independent 'cause I have to be…like I paid for my down payment for my apartment myself…and I was always stressed out…I didn't know who to ask….so I just kind of surfed the internet for like, three days straight trying to figure out everything."

Table 6 (continued)

Student 1	Student 2	Student 3	Student 4
Q9. What is the highest level of education of your parent? How has your parents' education affected your goals?			
I'm pretty sure my dad has only a high school education from the Philippines. My mom graduated with a nursing degree from the Philippines. "(The experience of my parents' education is) totally different (from my experience.)..... They always complain, like why do I need a calculator for math." Also, we didn't have a lot growing up so my mom would always tell me, "Education's all I can give you, so, you better do good."	I think my dad graduated high school and my mom graduated college with a nursing degree. She really wanted to pursue a career in government but her family didn't have enough money so she went for nursing instead. So even though my mom and her family struggled to get her through school, she completed her degree and "once she became a nurse she can give back to her family for what, her parents supported her with... and, like obviously she wanted to pass that down to me..." Also, "My mom always scared me, going like, "You're just gonna flip burgers at McDonalds," so I knew I had to go to college.	Both of my parents completed college. My mom earned her nursing degree and my dad earned an engineering degree. Even though, my grandmother only completed up to second grade, she put all of her children and even her husband's illegitimate children through college. I have "felt that pressure, since day one. I, I mean, I can seriously think back to like, first grade. And, being like, and having that instilled, liking knowing my parents had succeeded… in their academic careers. And, seriously, it's, it's never slipped my mind."	My mom has her bachelor's degree and started her masters in English. "My mom's really smart. And she always just like, pushed me to be smarter, I guess, and just like work harder…Plus, because… she's older…getting her masters…was kind of like a bigger deal. So it's kind of like inspiration." My dad went to college but dropped out.

Table 6 (continued)

Student 1	Student 2	Student 3	Student 4
Q10. How comfortable are you seeking help from campus personnel, such as counselors, deans, club advisors, etc.?			
I try to "avoid advising and counseling as much as possible, because I haven't had a great, like, experience with them…. Again, like in high school… you're given a counselor for all your four years so you build that relationship. And then you're just put in college, and you get like, all, you see all these different people." However, I go to my advisor when I need to register classes or having trouble with credits. But I really enjoy talking to Michael (director of student activities) and my former supervisor at the daycare, Cindy. Also, the lady at the career placement center was also very nice and helped me to find the job at the daycare.	The "staff members here are pretty friendly… even the people in the cafeteria, and the Willow Room, they're really nice, and they recognize your face. So, it's like really easy to like, start a conversation with them." However, I do try to avoid the advisors because "to be honest with you, they're not that much help." I've heard many instances where the advisors didn't advise students correctly and students ended up staying longer than necessary.	Frequently- "I'm a very friendly person and…it seems like there's this open door policy" at Amber College for both faculty and staff alike. I realized "they're just as much as a part of your college experience as your education and your extracurricular activities."	I don't really talk to the guidance counselors that much…but when I had to see them to register they were "helpful, but not on like a connecting level, where it's like, "Oh, I'm gonna go back to them asking questions."

Table 6 (continued)

Student 1	Student 2	Student 3	Student 4
Q11. How often and for what reason do you talk to campus personnel?			
I talk to Michael (director of student activities) and Cindy, my former supervisor, at the daycare. Last year, I was struggling a lot with balancing my classes and I was stressing a lot, so I turned to Michael for guidance. And Cindy "was just really nice to me, so I felt like, she could understand. She like, you know, had, took the time to get to know me, what I'm studying."	I talk to campus personnel such as my club advisor a lot and I turn to him for advice for a lot of things like how to pay for school and how to gain more opportunities and experience.	Often- "You know, I would make an effort to get to know the person's name and, so I could actually acknowledge them every once in a while… I've spoken with every advisor outside of this room I think, and... they really are, they're all here to help you, I mean you may not be their student, you may not be part of their club…Most of them, I wanna say, have this understanding, of being an educator. And how it, it doesn't, it's not restricted to the classroom."	I usually go when I need help with classes.

Table 6 (continued)

Student 1	Student 2	Student 3	Student 4
Q12. If you need assistance with your studies, financial aid or personal issues, who do you seek out on campus?			
I definitely talk to Michael of the student activities center and Cindy from the daycare. I didn't experience the one-on-one connection at Stone University as I do here at Amber college so "I'm glad to get that feeling back, back at home, and like, where I'm going to school, and hopefully I can get that back… once I transfer into Quartz University."	I usually talk to my friends if I have a personal issue but I also talk to the ASA club advisor because he's big in the dance community. We talk about a lot of things: family and stereotypes that go along with being Asian American. He "puts his two cents in all the time and he always helps us, with whatever, like he, at least he tries to." He's also an English instructor at the school and has encouraged me to do a work study through my major so I can get more experience and job opportunities.	"Personally, if I ever needed help with something, I would reach out to... naturally the person who would be in the same exact situation first. So, I guess that would be, that could be anyone, naturally I would expect that to be a fellow student, a fellow classmate like that. I find that, I never really... I was always reluctant to reach out to teachers, even if I was in good relationship to them."	"Probably the teachers…they'll take into account into what want to do and they'll tell you what you should do and say when you to the guidance counselors."
Q13. Do you belong to a program on campus that provides academic/mentoring support? If yes, what program and what type of support?			
Not really…I wish to be in a program like that but my classes conflicted with involvement.	No, "but I really wanted to do it, but like the last few years I just didn't' have time, like I felt like I had too much on my plate".	No	No

Table 6 (continued)

Student 1	Student 2	Student 3	Student 4
Q14. How often and for what reason(s) do you talk to your professor outside of class?			
Sometimes. I usually go to the professor for quick reference of the lecture. "If I'm struggling…I can't get, like outside help, with like a tutor or something, then I'll definitely... take advantage of their office hours.	"I mainly talk to them about, like my, my grade, or like this project, or this paper, and, stuff like that. But, it's like, um... I'd only talk to them when I need too.	I always make a point to greet my professors when I see them in passing and I tend to make a special bond with a professor every semester. For example, I connect well with the club advisor of Asian Student Alliance who happens to also be my English professor. "Because one thing I like to do, was for the longest time since I didn't know what I wanted to do, as far as my major... used to ask all my professors, like, 'How did you get to where you were?'"	"It really depends on the professors." Teachers who are approachable are easier to talk to after class. On the other hand, there are other professors "who don't really seem accessible …or don't have that good of a personality where it's like…you connect with them."

Table 6 (continued)

Student 1	Student 2	Student 3	Student 4
Q15. How comfortable do you feel seeking help from your professor when needed?			
"I'm really kinda intimidated" by professors and it's not like in high school where I get to know my instructors for a longer period of time. For instance, I avoided my stats professor because I didn't like her teaching style and I felt if I saw her in her office, she would explain the same way in class and it would be a waste of time. So I would try to go to other resources like my friends who have taken stats before or tutoring.	I'm a people person and it's easy for me to talk to people, but it was easier to talk to my high school instructors than my college professors. However, when I need to, I will definitely talk to my professors.	"I'm always reluctant to reach out to teachers. Because I guess there's this sense of pride in me that I'm just like no, don't ask for the teacher's help… I don't want them to think that I need help. However, "the first time I ever talked to a professor was here at Amber College, and I was at a four year university for almost two years."	Again, it depends on the professor.
Q16. How productive is your interaction with your professors when you meet them?			
Depends, I usually only seek out professors I like and connect with so my interaction is usually positive and I learn a lot.	Usually, my meetings with professors go well, especially since I only really go to them when I'm having trouble in class.	Although, I say I reach out to my professor after my friends, I know that they are my resource. "Because really, you should reach out to them first. A teacher. 'Cause if you, 'cause they'd be... Who could help you more than a teacher itself?"	It's productive since I'm meeting professors I feel good around.

Slate College

Student survey responses. The following table, Table 7, displays the demographic information of the student participants at Slate College. There are two individuals, aged 30 and 28 years old respectively. All of the individual are U.S. citizens; however, the first male participant was born in Philippines, while the other participants were born in the U.S. Both have declared a major. The first male participant is pursuing a finances degree. The second participant is pursuing a business management degree. Table 8 provides a summary of the participants' responses to the interview questions.

Table 7

Slate College Student Demographic Survey Results

	Student 1	Student 2
Gender	Male	Male
Age	30	28
Ethnic Identity	Filipino	Filipino
Citizenship Status	Citizen	Citizen
Birthplace	Philippines	U.S.
Major or Field of Interest	Finance	Business Management

Student interview responses.

Table 8

Slate College Student Response to Interview Questions

Student 1	Student 2
Q1. Why did you choose this college?	
I like the area the college is in and it has all the classes I need to transfer to a four year university.	I chose this college because "it's quite affordable, it's close by, I can take the bus there, and it has everything I need as far as my degree goes."
Q2. What subjects are you most and least interested in?	
I was really interested in my economics class because "it gave me a broad idea of how economics works, and how it affects everyday life". I'm the least interested in any math class or class that involves math because I'm not strong in math skills.	I enjoy my business marketing and management classes because I want to be a good leader and I dislike accounting because I'm not a strong math student.
Q3. What do you hope to accomplish while studying at this college?	
I hope to "focus on studying and maintain good grades."	I would like to achieve good grades, all A's and B's and also be recognized through a student activity like the honor society, Phi Theta Kappa.
Q4. Are you involved in co-curricular activities and what has motivated you to get involved?	
I'm not involved in any co-curricular activities.	I just applied to be a member of Phi Theta Kappa because it symbolizes academic accomplishment and I'm a member of the Filipino club because my friend encouraged me to join. I also work at a local ice cream shop to help pay tuition.
Q5. If you're involved, what aspects of being involved do you like the most?	
—	I really like how the group supports each other and we organize events that help the community. Also, the club members help to motivate and encourage me; we help each other academically, too.

Table 8 (continued)

Student 1	Student 2
Q6. If you're not involved, what is preventing you from participating	
I work full-time at a bank when I'm not attending classes.	—
Q7. Is your family/spouse supportive of your education? Why or why not?	
Yes, my mom is supportive and she's always "pushing me hard to study" and she also helps to pay my tuition so that I can "get a better job."	Yes, my family supports me in academic goals and they want me to finish college, "but at the same time, they can't support me as much, I feel, because they didn't go to college themselves…, they don't know how to guide me, in what you do, especially when it was for financial aid, they couldn't help me on that. So that's why, it's, it's been very difficult." However, they do offer their moral and emotional support.
Q8. Do you have family members who have attended college and have they assisted in your education? How?	
Yes, I have siblings that have graduated college. I don't always ask them for help but when I do, they help. For example, when I was struggling in physics, I asked my brother who is good in the sciences and he was able to answer my questions.	I'm the only one in my family in college now

Table 8 (continued)

Student 1	Student 2
Q9. What is the highest level of education of your parent? How has your parents' education affected your education goals?	
My mom completed her bachelor's degree in the Philippines and knowing she finished college motivates me to complete my degree and get a better job I have now	My dad completed only a year of college and my mom completed high school in their native, the Philippines. Their educational experiences has "affected me a lot, because they didn't know where to guide me, completely... uh, after high school, because, again, my dad didn't do, didn't stay long in college, to experience what you're supposed to do, so they, they didn't have no idea, they... the best they helped me, was from high school… So I had to figure that out on my own… But at least, I, I can, I can contribute to sharing my knowledge with my brother and sister."
Q10. How comfortable are you seeking help from campus personnel, such as counselors, deans, club advisors, etc.?	
Not very comfortable. I feel the counselors I meet, "don't even care, all they care is just to teach, and, and for the money..."	I'm comfortable
Q11. How often and for what reason do you talk to campus personnel?	
Not often, because I usually try to find answers myself.	I talk to the Filipino club advisor often because "he gives me good advice, um, both academic and personal life."
Q12. If you need assistance with your studies, financial aid or personal issues, who do you seek out on campus?	
I would probably seek out an advisor.	I like reaching out to students who belong to the student government because they're "in charge of helping out everybody." I also like talking to the members of Phi Theta Kappa because they're encouraging and supportive.

Table 8 (continued)

Student 1	Student 2
Q13. Do you belong to a program on campus that provides academic/mentoring support? If yes, what program and what type of support?	
No	No
Q14. How often and for what reason(s) do you talk to your professor outside of class?	
Not often because I usually "learn things on my own, and... If I would ever need help, then I would go, but, so far I haven't."	"I don't talk to them too often, and if I do it's because I'm unsure of an assignment... Uh, or, just to understand deadlines, or if I can't make it to class, uh, one day, that's the only time I'll talk to them."
Q15. How comfortable do you feel seeking help from your professor when needed?	
It depends on the teacher, but not often comfortable	I'm not that comfortable, but I will if I have to because I want to do well in my classes.
Q16. How productive is your interaction with your professors when you meet them?	
I'm not sure, because I usually don't meet with my professors.	My meetings usually go well.

Granite College

Student survey responses. The following table, Table 9, displays the demographic information of the student participant at Granite College. There is one female participant who was the 31 years old. She is a permanent resident of the U.S. and emigrated from Cambodia. She is pursuing a degree in nursing. Table 10 provides a summary of the participants' responses to the interview questions.

Table 9

Granite College Student Demographic Survey Results

	Student
Gender	Female
Age	31
Ethnic Identity	Cambodian
Citizenship Status	Permanent Resident
Birthplace	Cambodia
Major or Field of Interest	Nursing

Student interview responses.

Table 10

Granite College Student Response to Interview Questions

Student
Q1. Why did you choose this college?
I chose this college but I feel comfortable here. Slate is the first college I attended since emigrating from Cambodia and I like the teachers and there are many programs offered.
Q2. What subjects are you most and least interested in?
I really enjoy my English classes and I'm really dreading my computer classes since I don't know much about computers
Q3. What do you hope to accomplish while studying at this college?
I hope to improve my English so I can enter the nursing program and get a better job.
Q4. Are you involved in co-curricular activities and what has motivated you to get involved?
No, I'm not involved

Table 10 (continued)

Student
Q5. If you're involved, what aspects of being involved do you like the most?
—
Q6. If you're not involved, what is preventing you from participating?
I'm not aware of the clubs and I don't have time
Q7. Is your family/spouse supportive of your education? Why or why not?
I support myself. My parents just moved to the U.S. and they don't have much. However, they want me to go to school.
Q8. Do you have family members who have attended college and have they assisted in your education? How?
No
Q9. What is the highest level of education of your parent? How has your parents' education affected your education goals?
Both my parents finished high school. They want me to continue my schooling and my mom is always saying, "The more we learn, the more we know, so, that's good."
Q10. How comfortable are you seeking help from campus personnel, such as counselors, deans, club advisors, etc.?
Not too comfortable.
Q11. How often and for what reason do you talk to campus personnel?
Not often.
Q12. If you need assistance with your studies, financial aid or personal issues, who do you seek out on campus?
I usually seek out academic advising if I have a problem with registering for a class.
Q13. Do you belong to a program on campus that provides academic/mentoring support? If yes, what program and what type of support?
No

Table 10 (continued)

Student
Q14. How often and for what reason(s) do you talk to your professor outside of class?
Um, not very often. When something I need, I talk to them.
Q15. How comfortable do you feel seeking help from your professor when needed?
I feel somewhat comfortable
Q16. How productive is your interaction with your professors when you meet them?
—

Analysis

Astin's Theory of Involvement and Student Responses

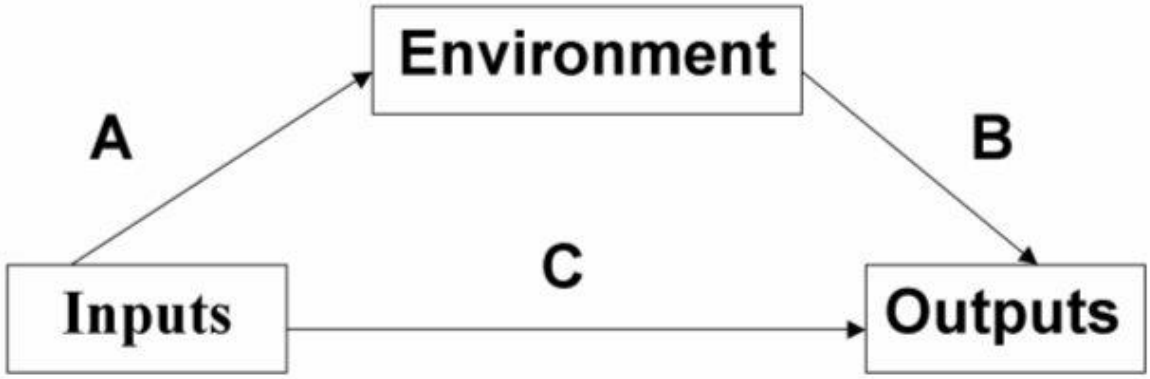
Astin's Theory of Involvement (1984) explained that students change and develop as a result of being involved in co-curricular activities, and the evolution of the student through active campus engagement is associated to desirable outcomes of institutions of higher education. The theory is based on three core elements of inputs, environment and outcomes, also known as Astin's I-E-O model and five basic postulates on involvement. Astin (1999) emphasized the behavioral aspect of student involvement:

> I am not denying that motivation is an important aspect of involvement, but rather I am emphasizing that the behavioral aspects, in my judgment, are critical: It is not so much what the individual think or feels, but what the individual does, how he or she behaves, that defines and identifies involvement (519).

Although Astin (199) recognized a student's motivation as important, he also believed that a student's action play a significant role in student development and are the defining factors of involvement.

Three elements compose the central notions of the theory and is referred to as Astin's I-E-O model and they underscore the importance of an institution to understand a student's: 1) inputs, 2) environment, 3) outcomes upon entry to the institution. This model was created to be used as a guiding framework for assessments in higher education and compels researchers to focus not only on student outcomes, but also the inputs and environmental variables in student performance evaluations (Astin, 1993). Inputs "refers to those personal qualities the student brings initially to the education program (including the student's initial level of developed talent at the time of entry)" (Astin, 1993, p. 18). In other words, input refers to a student's background and qualities upon entrance to an institution and it underscores the importance to understand a student's demographics, background and prior experiences upon their entry into the institution. Examples of student inputs might include demographic information, educational background, political orientation, behavior pattern, degree aspiration, reason for selecting an institution, financial status, disability status, career choice, major field of study, life goals, and reason for attending college (Astin, 1993). Environment accounts for all the experiences a student will have in college and outcomes comprise a student's characteristics, knowledge, attitudes, beliefs, and values that exist after a student has graduated college (Astin, 1984).

Figure 2. Astin's Input-Environment-Outcome (I-E-O) Model



Assessment for Excellence (p. 18), by Alexander W. Astin, 1993, Phoenix: The Oryx Press. Copyright 1993 by The Oryx Press.

In addition to the three elements, there are five postulates to Astin's involvement theory (1999):

1. Involvement refers to the investment of physical and psychological energy in various objects. The objects be highly generalized (the student's experience) or highly specific (preparing for a chemistry exam).
2. Regardless of its object, involvement occurs along a continuum; that is, different students manifest different degrees of involvement in a given object, and the same student manifests different degrees of involvement in different objects at different times.
3. Involvement has both quantitative and qualitative features. The extent of a student's involvement in academic work, for instance, can be measured quantitatively (how many hours the student spends studying) and qualitatively (whether the student reviews and comprehends reading assignments or simply stares at the textbook and daydreams).

4. The amount of student learning and personal development associated with any educational program is directly proportional to the quality and quantity of student involvement in that program.
5. The effectiveness of any educational policy or practice is directly related to the capacity of that policy of practice to increase student involvement.

In summary, academic involvement is the amount of physical and psychological energy a student spends on the academic experience which can include: energy devoted to studying, time spent on campus, participation in student organizations and interactions with staff, faculty and other students. Astin (1999) asserted in his first four postulates, that involvement requires an investment of psychosocial and physical energy, the involvement is continuous, and the amount of energy invested varies from student to student. Additionally, there is a direct correlation between what the student gains and the extent the student was involved. For the purpose of this research, Astin's I-E-O model and postulates one through four were used in analyzing the research results because they have more applicability to the study than the fifth postulate, which focus more on effective student programming design.

Critical Race Theory and Student Responses

Teranishi et al (2009) stated, "The treatment of Asian Americans has been driven by assumptions and stereotypes that characterize the population as a model minority with "stellar educational achievement" who overcame all barriers as a minority group to take over some of America's most selective colleges and universities" (p. 57). This perpetual message about the AAPI group prevails in the academic and policy arena and mainstream media. Consider for instance, a *New York Times* article published in 1997 that praised the remarkable academic achievements of the AAPI group and calling for others to learn from these excellent students

(Krystof, 2006). And more recently, another *New York Times* article published in 2015 titled, "The Asian Advantage" that asks, "Why are Asian-Americans so successful in America?" Thereby, completing dismissing the disparities faced by Asian Americans and other minority groups, such as African-Americans. The media promotes the model minority stereotypes of Asian Americans and positions the perceived success of Asian Americans against other minority groups, i.e. African-Americans to prevent inter-racial unification between minorities and maintain a system of racial hierarchy and white authority.

Therefore, Critical Race Theory was another framework employed in this study because it provided a critical analysis of race and racism to better understand students who have persisted in college. Critical Race Theory (CRT) is an academic discipline that examines U.S. society and culture, through the intersection of race, law, and power. CRT has been criticized as a pessimistic, cynical and negative view of racial progress (Crenshaw, et al., 1995; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). For many, Critical Race Theory can also be an unnerving concept because it questions all the elements that characterize the modern, diverse society Americans live today such as: racism is history and rarely occurs because as a society, we all learned from past mistakes. However, CRT is a useful framework to evaluate assumptions about race, racism, oppression and since it originates from the spirit of activism, it can be used to promote social justice. Further, Critical Race Theory provides a valuable lens in which the struggles and experiences of misrepresented Asian American and Pacific Islander students can be identified and analyzed so that appropriate resources can be provided to better address their needs.

Because the very nature of CRT is to critique the simplification of one's identity into a single definition there is an understandable resistance to simplify Critical Race Theory (Rimando, 2011). And although some scholars may identify different premises, they are all

centered on critical thought and racism (Rimando, 2011). Daniel Solorzano (1997, 1998) identified five major tenets that emerge in Critical Race Theory literature for the field of education:

1. Racism is socially constructed and is endemic to American life.
2. Racial equality and equity only occurs when there is an "interest convergence," with the majority group.
3. The use of CRT as a critical lens is founded in the commitment to social justice.
4. The voices and experiences of people of color are essential for enlightenment and application.
5. Researchers must use interdisciplinary to holistically address issues of racism.

These tenets provide a framework in which researchers can examine historical and present-day marginalization of Asian Americans in higher education and how to address these issues (Buenavista, Jayakumar and Misa-Escalante, 2009).

The Centrality of Race and Racism. Critical Race Theory scholars assert that racism is prevalent in American society and is critical of the astonishment members of the majority may have towards acts of racism and prejudice. CRT argues that racism and bigotry usually occur in small, every day acts, or "micro-aggressions," not violent, dramatic or violent acts and thus, is invisible to the white majority. According to Delgado and Stefancic (2001), a "micro-aggression" is a "stunning small encounter with racism, usually unnoticed by members of the majority race," which cause aggravation and pain to marginalized groups (p. 151). Typically, these micro-aggressions tend to go unnoticed by the majority, and thus, easily dismissed and the reactions of the marginalized groups are minimized. Critical Race Theory recognizes that the accumulation of countless unaddressed micro-aggressions further perpetuate institutional racism

in our institutions, societal values and inter-personal interactions. Racism can still remain invisible to the white majority when it becomes larger acts, or "macro-aggression" in issues like housing, education, employment practices and legal system. Macro-aggressions are ingrained into daily American life so much that it becomes a normal, "uninteresting" part of life for the majority, and the CRT lens must be used to expose it (Taylor, 2009; R. S. Chang, 1993; Ladson-Billings, 1999).

Challenge to Dominant Ideology. Another CRT tenet is "interest convergence" which suggests equality and equity will be pursued when the interests of people of color converge with the interest of whites. Critical Race Theory counters beliefs of neutrality, objectivity, color-blindness and meritocracy by emphasizing such ideas are inapplicable to explaining racial differences (Buenavista, Jayakumar and Misa-Escalante, 2009). For example, Bell (1980) cited that decision to desegregate public schools in the landmark case of *Brown v. Board of Education* did not originate in the spirit civil rights for the American people, but rather the decision was made by the government to improve its international image regarding race issues. Moreover, this tenet underlines that such notions are actually ideas created by the majority in America to disguise white self-interest, power and privilege (Buenavista, Jayakumar and Misa-Escalante, 2009).

Commitment to Social Justice. The ability to identify inequality perpetuated by dominant ideology has motivated CRT scholars to work towards eradicating racism in the United States. Solorzano and Yosso (2002) affirms that just as CRT is set on dismantling institutions that perpetuate racism and inequality, there is a commitment to social justice by ending all forms of discrimination (as cited in Buenavista, Jayakumar and Misa-Escalante, 2009). Hence, social justice can be pursued through critical education research and the dissemination the research

which is necessary to establish educational policies to challenge practices that perpetuate inequality.

Centrality of Experiential Knowledge. Considering that the voices of people in marginal groups are usually excluded from dominant narratives, Critical Race Theory places great importance on the voices and experiences of the marginalized to advance the commitment to social justice. The experiential knowledge of individuals in marginal groups is a good source of information because "it is also necessary in developing critical analyses regarding the ways in which racism is endemic" (Buenavista, Jayakumar and Misa-Escalante, 2009, p. 73). Interview narratives, counter-story telling and oral history are the primary means CRT scholars to gain insight and challenge racial issues.

Interdisciplinary Perspective. Critical Race theory is not ahistorical. Quite the contrary, it is important to consider race and racism in both the historical and contemporary contexts when understanding race and racism. Moreover, an interdisciplinary approach can be useful when highlighting the connection of the past and present context of issues of race. Solorzano and Yosso (2002) proffered that gender studies and ethnic studies are a couple of disciplines that CRT uses to gain a greater understanding of race and racism in higher education (as cited in Buenavista, Jayakumar and Misa-Escalante, 2009).

These five tenets inform theory, research, pedagogy, curriculum and policy and collectively, they challenge current modes of scholarship (Yosso, 2005). In this study, tenet four, centrality of experiential knowledge, was used as a tool for purposes of analyzing the findings of this research. Although scholarly research has increased over the past 20 years, important issues Asian Americans encounter are still concealed in educational research and policy. Teranishi et al (2009) stated: "The treatment of Asian Americans has been driven by

assumptions and stereotypes that characterize the population as a model minority with "stellar educational achievement" who overcame all barriers as a minority group to take over some of America's most selective colleges and universities" (p. 57). While Asian Americans have been included in debates about racial and ethnic minority representation since the 1980's, they have mostly been used to legitimize or devalue the experiences of other racial and ethnic groups (Takagaki, 1992). Rarely, has attention been given to the authentic and diverse Asian American experiences and perspectives and this group remains to be marginalized in education discourse. Hune and Chan (2000) asserted that the persistent aggregation of all Asian and Asian American ethnic subgroups cause an inaccurate standardization of their experiences which typically reflect collective tales of success. This aggregation and standardization is detrimental to Southeast Asian/Pacific Island Americans who are under-represented in higher education because the model minority myth causes these groups to be overlooked in higher education research that specifically focuses on minority students (Okamura and Agbayani, 1997; Teranishi et al, 2004; Museus, 2009) Given that the experiences of Southeast Asian American students are often buried in aggregated data and the model minority assumption, interview narratives allow these ignored students an opportunity to voice their experiences.

Guiding Question 1: What Academic Factors Contributed to the Southeast Asian American Students' Decision to Attend and Persist in Community College?

Student interviews responses for Question 1. A majority of the students chose to attend their community college because the close proximity to their house and family and affordability. All of the students liked the idea they would not have to spend as much on tuition as in a four-year university; actually, two of the participants won a scholarship that helped to fund their education at their community college. In fact, a third of the students were actually

reverse transfers and/or originally planned on attending a four-year university after graduating high school before returning to their community college due to convenience and cost. Also, it seems that all the students enjoyed or looked forward to taking classes pertaining to their major. Interestingly, a majority stated they disliked their math classes because they experienced trouble learning the subject, and many of the students cited they did not fit stereotype of the Asian student who excels at math. All of the students declared their main objective for attending community college was achieving high grades in their classes and many of them discussed plans to transfer to a four-year college.

Astin's Theory of Involvement as it relates to Question 1. There appears to be a strong relationship between Astin's I-E-O model and the participants' responses. Although most of the students' responses were indirectly tied to academics, the responses were still connected strongly to academics and to why the students chose the community college. Astin (1999) affirms that a student's inputs or demographics, background and past experiences affect their environment, or experience the student has in college. For example, a student's socio-economic background and past experience and why participants chose their community college and persistence. All but one participant stated that affordability was one of the major reasons for attending community college, which is important because community college offered an opportunity for higher education to these students that they otherwise would not have. Actually, 30 percent of the participants won scholarships, which was a great incentive for the participant to attend the community college and of course, scholarships typically have academic requirements that serve as motivators for students to persist. Since all of the participants declared that they all planned on transferring to a four year university, the low cost of attending community college would allow them to save money for university tuition. Additionally, several of the participants

commented that the low cost of community college allowed them to explore academic and career possibilities without spending too much on tuition. The reverse transfer students, who needed time to reassess their goals, especially appreciated the opportunity to explore classes and experiences at community college without feeling guilty about tuition costs as they did at the four-year institution. All the students appreciated that once they do transfer to a university, they all would have already explored and determined what they wanted to pursue once they finally transfer to a university which was another factor in persistence.

Critical Race Theory as it relates to Question 1. There appears to be a strong relationship between Critical Race Theory's tenet of centrality for experiential knowledge and the participants' responses because the responses give a deeper insight on Southeast Asian/Pacific Island students' reasons for choosing community college. The popular narrative about Asian American students is that they are over-representing four-year universities and are excelling in the university setting and beyond. However, based on the narratives of the participants, the college experience demonstrates otherwise for Asian Americans. The very fact that the participants are attending community college discredits that the popular assumption that Asians are over-representing selective colleges and supports the research that most Southeast pacific Asian American are more likely to attend a two year college. Low tuition and close proximity to home ranked high for a majority of the participants' reasons for attending community college. Moreover, a third of the participants are reverse transfers from four year universities. The major reason cited by the reverse transfer students to enroll in community college was not feeling comfortable enough to seek help from advisors and professors and the high cost of tuition.

In addition, the reverse transfer students could not justify paying the high cost of a university tuition when they were 1) not doing well academically and/or 2) not certain what they wanted to do in the future. Taking time away from the university and taking classes at a community college to explore their options allowed these students to reflect and still earn general education credits that could transfer to a university once they figured what was best for them. Also, one of the reverse transfers admitted to losing a scholarship that allowed him to attend the four year university. He lost the scholarship, because he could not adjust well into college life his first year and his grades suffered. His experience is counter to the model minority myth that all Asian Americans excel in college. In fact, counter to the stereotype, he expressed having a better experience at the community college than the four-year university. He was also appreciative for the opportunities to learn and grow academically and personally at the community college.

It is also a well-known stereotype that all Asians excel in the math and science. However, when asked what subject they liked least, a majority of the students responded with, "Math." The primary reason that those students disliked math was that it was not their best subject, contrary to the prevalent stereotype. In addition, the majors of the participants did not center on the math and sciences, rather the majors varied from nursing to business to sociology. These participants didn't have the natural inclination towards math and sciences as the stereotype suggests. Just like students from other ethnic groups, these Asian American students spent time thinking and exploring carefully their major/career pursuit.

Guiding Question 2: How Do Co-Curricular/Extra-Curricular Activities Contribute to the Persistence of Southeast Asian American Students?

Student interviews responses for Question 2. Exactly half of the participants were involved in co-curricular activities and the other half of the participants were not involved in co-curricular activities. Of the students who declared they were they participated in co-curricular activities, a majority of the students were members of a cultural club and appreciated the networking support of their peers that the club provided. In addition, a majority of those who participated in the co-curricular activities enjoyed the satisfaction of organizing and taking part in events that benefit their community and charitable causes. Many commented on how taking part in co-curricular activities helped them to perform well academically by providing a network of peer support, the opportunity to connect with other people on campus and community as well as help with balancing time and responsibilities.

For the students that did not partake in co-curricular activities, the main reason was split between not having enough time to study and having to work. Most of the students that did not participate actually attempted to join a club discovered that participating was too much a demand on their time that could be spent on things they valued more such as working or studying.

Astin's Theory of Involvement as it relates to Question 2. Based on the student responses, there seems to be a strong relationship between Astin's (1999) first four postulates that involvement requires an investment of psychosocial and physical energy, the involvement is continuous, and the amount of energy invested varies from student to student. Just as Astin (1999) asserted students vary in the type and amount of energy spent on an activity, the participants in the study described varying types of involvement, degrees of energy devoted to the involvement and the benefits they gained from their involvement. Most of the students who

partook in student organization, however, the students who didn't chose to spend their energy on studying and/or part-time job to help sustain their education. A majority of students who participated in co-curricular activity described the deep satisfaction they received in the events as they usually involved helping others on campus or the community. In addition, the students also described that becoming active in campus organizations helped to make connections with staff, faculty and other students which in turn helped them in their academic progress. For the students who chose to spend more time on their studies or work gained better preparation for their classes to maximize performance and tuition money so they can continue their studies.

Critical Race Theory as it relates to Question 2. The responses of the students indicate a strong relationship between Critical Race Theory's tenet of centrality for experiential knowledge as the responses provide more insight to Southeast Asian American students and their experiences and perspective related to participating in co-curricular/extracurricular activities. There is a widespread narrative that Asian American students are one-dimensional students whose main priority is studying and earning high grades and do not socialize or participate in co-curricular activities. Based on the majority of the participant's responses of this study, the counter-narrative is that Asian Americans do participate in co-curricular/extra-curricular activities. Furthermore, the students who participate find their experiences rewarding, personally and academically.

This stereotype stemmed from selective universities artificially lowering the admissions rates for Asian students and falsely accusing Asian students of not being "well-rounded" candidates and rarely participating in extracurricular activities (Le, 2012). However, national research showed that the rates for participating in co-curricular activities such as sports, performing arts, social clubs and community clubs were similar to that of white students (Le,

2012). In the early 1980's, more Asian Americans were applying to college than before and soon it became common that 10-15% of a given university's student population was of Asian ancestry when Asians were only about 3 percent of America's general population. Consequently, many universities became alarmed in the change of their student population and imposed an unofficial quota of Asian Americans they would accept before rejecting clearly qualified Asian American students.

Soon, Asian American students were accusing universities such as U.C. Berkeley, UCLA, Stanford, Harvard, Princeton, and Brown of setting an upper limit on their admission numbers. The universities eventually admitted to problems with their admission procedures but never admitted any wrong doing (Le, 2012). Soon, opponents of affirmative action were arguing just like whites, Asian Americans were victims of affirmative action and being denied admission so that "lesser qualified" students of other ethnic groups (i.e. African-Americans, Latinos and Native Americans) were being admitted. After careful investigation and research, it was found that the real concern was that Asian Americans were not competing with other ethnic groups, but with white "legacy students" who were usually admitted regardless of their qualifications (Le, 2012).

Despite the fact, research has shown that Asian American students have been found to participate in school programming and learning experiences as their white counterparts, Asian American students are still widely believed to be less balanced academically. However, the participants in this study prove that Asian American students do participate in co-curricular activities and enjoy being social and well-rounded students. All the students who actively participated discussed the rewards of taking part in their social club. One student even commented that participating in co-curricular activities helped her to balance her time and her

college experience. Even for the students who did not participate in co-curricular activities, most wanted to participate except they had other obligations such as work.

Guiding Question 3: What Role Does Family Contribute to the Persistence of Southeast Asian American Students?

Student interviews responses for Question 3. For all the participants, family, especially parental figures influenced their decision to continue their education and all parents supported, in one way or another, the student's educational journey. All the students commented that their parents were source of moral support. All the students made reference to conversations their parents would have with them about the importance of a college education for a better life. In addition to encouragement, thirty percent stated that their parent/guardian were also source of financial support for school. For sixty percent of the participants, at least one parent had graduated college. Understandably, for those students, their parents' higher education experience served as example and motivation for their own pursuit of a college education. However, it should be noted that the majority of the parents who finished college, did so in their native country, i.e. the Philippines, in which is more is similar to the education received in technical schools in the United States (Buenaviasta, Jayakumar, Misa-Escalante, 2009). Thus, it has been asserted that second-generation Filipino American students should be considered 1.5 generation students (as cited in Buenavista, 2007).

For the forty percent of participants whose parents did not complete any type of college, the expectation for those students to pursue and earn a college degree was still present and strongly influenced their decision as well. And although, the students seemed to understand that their academic achievements and journey would be their own, they all alluded or directly stated that attending college fulfilled a filial obligation. Although parents served as source of support

for the participants, thirty percent of the remarked on how their parents were also a source of stress in regards to their academic progress and decisions.

Furthermore, one student commented on an unarticulated pressure and expectation he felt from his family, especially from his parents and grandmother, due to the fact that his parents and elder family members completed college despite challenges. Other participants remarked on the tension between themselves and their parents about what major they should pursue. In addition, the students discussed the internal struggle they had with doing what they want in school and appeasing their parents' wishes. Despite the burden of their parents' expectation and possible disappointment, it seemed the students were able to come to terms with self-fulfillment as they all are pursuing majors of their choice.

Astin's Theory of Involvement as it relates to Question 3. There appears to be no relationship between Astin's (1993) Theory of Involvement and family since family is not addressed in the postulates. However, there is an indirect relationship between Astin's I-E-O model and the family support all the participants discussed in their interviews because it demonstrates that a student's background or in Astin's terms, "inputs" does influence their experience in college. All the students commented and provided examples of how their family supports their college education. Furthermore, all the students commented on how their parents/guardians instilled in them at an early age the importance of education in general which established a foundation and for many of them, an expectation that they should be pursuing and completing a college degree. The primary reason the students stated that their families, i.e. parents, emphasized the value of education growing up was so that they can have better opportunities than they did. It is crucial to note that all of the students' grew up with an "immigrant mindset" either through the influence of their parents who immigrated to the U.S. or

their own immigrant experience from their native country to the U.S. The "immigrant mindset" is defined as someone who takes risks, seeks and takes advantage of all opportunities and employs a strong work ethic to overcome adversity to reach the goal of a better life in a new world. This "immigrant mindset" of the participant's college experience helped to nourish their drive to pursue college and persistence even in the face of challenges they described in their interview. In addition, there was a sense with all the students that they were not only going to college for their own benefit but to also make their parents proud.

Critical Race Theory as it relates to Question 3. The responses of the students indicate a strong relationship between Critical Race Theory's tenet of centrality for experiential knowledge as the responses provide a better understanding Southeast Asian American students and how family shaped their college experience. The popular narrative of Asian Americans is that they have strong family units, and based on the participants' response, family was found to be a compelling influence on students'; however, the internal struggle Asian Americans' undergo to fulfill parental expectations, societal pressures and self-fulfillment is rarely addressed. Chao and Tseng (2002) asserted Asian Americans have strong family ties and that their family ties serve as reference point for other aspects of their lives, including education, politics, money and religion. Because many Asians immigrate to the United States in pursuit of the "American Dream" of a better life and greater employment and education opportunities, parents of Asian Americans put pressure on their children to achieve academically and the educational pressure influences the vocational choices of their children (Leong, 1985). Family cohesion is demonstrated through interdependence and filial piety (Chao & Tseng, 2002). Therefore, Asian American children, out of respect for their parents often aim for occupations that are indicative of high socioeconomic status and their parents' sacrifices. A psychological study found that

"Asian-American college students were the most likely to have their major or career choice influenced by parental views, even when not explicit" (Tewari & Alvarez, 2009, p. 468).

There seems to be a strong relationship between the evidence that Asian Americans are influenced by their parents for academic achievement in this study. All of the participants described their parents as being supportive in their endeavor to earn a college degree and a majority of the students commented that their parents are not only supportive but that there is an expectation as well. In fact, findings of psychological research showed that parental involvement may only be partially responsible for the academic success of Asian American students, while parental expectations actually play a more crucial role (Chao & Tseng, 2002). Many of the participants discussed how appreciative they were of their parents' effort to love and support them throughout their lives but they also discussed the stress they felt trying to fulfill their parents' expectation of them. One participant discussed the unspoken expectation of not only his parents to pursue college but also of his live-in grandmother because of her legacy of sending all her children to college despite being a low-income single-mother in the Philippines. Another participant discussed the discord she experienced with her parents when she chose not to pursue nursing, her parents' preferred career for her. Although her parents finally relented and allowed her to pursue the major of her choice, she expressed feeling anxiety over whether she her academic decisions because they were in opposition to her parents. Many of the students expressed the conflict of fulfilling their own needs and fulfilling their parents' expectations. Although, many of the students experienced a struggle with their parents, all of them were able to reconcile their needs and desire over their parents as they are all pursuing the major of their choice.

Guiding Question 4: What Role Does Campus Personnel Contribute to the Persistence of Southeast Asian American Students?

Student interviews responses for Question 4. Campus personnel comprises a wide variety of people that work in the college including professors, staff members like academic advisors, office assistants and cafeteria employees that construct the daily environment for the student. It seemed that students' interaction with campus personnel greatly depends on their comfort level with that individual and secondly, the actual need to interact with that individual. Whatever the reason a student may interact with personnel, the bond created between the two parties most often affected the participant positively. For example, twenty percent of the students commented that they only sought a professor's during office hours or an academic advisor's guidance only if absolutely necessary, but when asked if the meeting(s) were positive and productive despite their hesitation to seek help, they all said yes. A majority of participants commented on feeling good about being able to seek advice or guidance from a staff member such as club advisor or mentor from program designed to retain at-risk students like TRiO. It seemed that student development staff was the primary connection to the college. This person was someone participants could seek advice, vent fears and frustrations and receive motivation and encouragement. Vice versa, the reluctance asking their professors was prevalent among the students. Although most of the students said they would discuss issues or questions with professors, a good portion said it was only after they exhausted other resources such as classmates, or the Internet. Several students said that they only talked to a professor they felt personally comfortable with.

Astin's Theory of Involvement as it relates to Question 4. There is a strong relationship between Astin's Theory of Involvement and his I-E-O model and the participants'

responses in regard to their interaction with campus personnel. According to the participants' responses, there seems to be a strong relationship between students' interaction with staff and faculty and Astin's postulate for student development. A majority of the participants had at least one staff member or faculty member they felt comfortable enough to turn to in times of need. The students who described a close relationship were the students who actively participated in co-curriculars. And just as in Astin's fourth postulate, those students who were deeply involved also described the rewards of their engagement which included self-satisfaction from helping others and participating in programming for the college and community and creating connections with peers and staff and faculty. In turn, the gains the students experienced through their engagement bonded them to the college and helped them to continue their studies.

Critical Race Theory as it relates to Question 4. The responses of the students indicate a strong relationship between Critical Race Theory's tenet of centrality for experiential knowledge as the responses offer an insight to Southeast Asian American students and their experiences and perspective related to their interactions with faculty and staff. The model minority myth has perpetuated the misguided narrative that Asian Americans students have a natural inclination to succeed academically with minimal support from teachers and the institution. However, based on the participants' responses, Asian Americans students, in reality, do need and appreciated the support and connection they make with campus personnel. Although, many of the participants commented that it was difficult to find campus personnel they felt comfortable and confident in to seek help. However, for the participants who found support in campus personnel, they spoke passionately about how that personnel has helped them through difficult situations and their admiration and appreciation for that personnel.

The model minority myth promotes the belief that Asian American students are high-achieving students who have overcome challenges in such a way that exempts them from needing any support like other minority groups such as African-Americans and Latinos. Buenavista, Jaykumar and Misa-Escalante (2009) said: "Because Asian Americans are often constructed as model minorities, they are assumed to be undeserving of institutional support in the form of target outreach and retention services." However, this is a damaging belief to the Asian American students who do not fit this stereotype, especially Asian Pacific Islander American students who do have very low rates of college degree attainment and would certainly benefit from being included in support programming just like other ethnic groups.

This phenomenon of excluding Asian Americans from support services is confirmed in the study as only two of the participants in the study took part of federally funded program designed specifically to support and retain students, such as TRiO. Although, many of the students who did not take part of a retention program commented that they would like to participate if given the chance. For those students who were part of the TRiO program, they spoke highly of the support they received from the program and the advisor assigned to them was the staff person they could count on to help.

Emerging Themes

Various emerging themes were identified from the students interviewed. In a subsequent review and analysis of data collected from the students' interviews and from the web-based survey responses to the four research questions, the following emerging themes became apparent:

- Math was the academic subject a majority of participants dreaded

- Reverse transfers appreciated the community college experience over the four-year university experience prior
- Despite pressure from parents to follow their expectations, students still were able to achieve self-fulfillment

The first emerging theme was that math was the subject an overwhelming 70 percent of the participant stated they dislike math because they feel math is not a subject in which they excel. This is significant because of the widespread stereotype that all Asian students have a natural inclination towards mathematics. One of the students was aware that by naming math as the subject she disliked and performed poorly in, she was going against the stereotype and expectations of others. The subjects or classes that most students enjoyed or looked forwarded to taking were varied from English to the sciences to business management courses.

The second emerging theme was that a good portion of the participants, 30 percent, were reverse transfers from four-year universities and they all expressed appreciation and gratification for their experience in community college. When asked why they chose to enroll in the community college, these students revealed that they had attended a four-year university prior and discovered the environment and overall experience was not right for them which motivated them to enroll in community college. In addition to wanting to find a college experience different from the one they had in the four year university, the low cost of tuition was another motivating force to enroll in community college which all of the reverse transfer participant said helped them to have a college experience, explore classes and academic major options and earn credits to transfer back to the four year university when they are ready. In addition, all those participants appreciated the relationships they created with their peers, faculty and staff which

helped to develop personally and academically, something they lacked at the four year university.

The third emerging theme was that one third of the students described being able to pursue self-fulfillment despite opposing parental expectations. Expectedly, all of the participants described their parents as supportive motivators for their college pursuit. However, these students further expressed anxiety to follow their career/major choice of their parents stemming from childhood. Still, all the students recognized that they needed to follow the career/major their choice. One student stated it best, "I feel like, if I don't (follow my parents' preferred career path), like I'm disappointing them, but, in a way, I need to do this for myself, because I know if I can't do it now, I can't do it later." Although pursuing college may be partly connected to fulfilling their parents' dreams, these students acknowledge that their academic journey is their own by forging their own academic path.

Summary

This chapter revealed the findings derived from the data and information collected from the students in urban and suburban Illinois community colleges. Data from the demographic surveys, document review, and participant's responses to the interview questions, were presented in table format for organization and to allow for ease of comprehension.

The chapter begins with demographic information of the colleges and participants. The purpose of this information was to reveal similarities, differences, and gain overall understanding of the background of the four colleges and participants. Astin's I-E-O model and Theory of Involvement and Critical Race Theory were used as theoretical frameworks to analyze and determine whether there is relationship between the participants' responses to the four research questions and both theories.

Lastly, the following three emergent themes were recognized: 1) a majority of the participants self-identified as poor performers in math and dreaded the class; 2) reverse transfers appreciated the community college experience over the four-year university experience prior, and 3) students were still able to achieve self-fulfillment despite strong parental pressure regarding their academic choices.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, Implications and Recommendations

This research was conducted to identify contributing factors of persistence for Southeast Asian American community college students. The qualitative research approach utilized a semi-structured face-to-face interviews, web-based survey, field notes and documents to allow triangulation for triangulation of findings from various data sources.

Chapter five includes a presentation of the research conclusion developed based on discoveries revealed from four researching guiding questions. The following four research guiding questions were posed for the study:

1. What academic factors contributed to the Southeast Asian American students' decision to attend and persist in community college?
2. How do co-curricular/extra-curricular activities contribute to the persistence of Southeast Asian American students?
3. What role does family contribute to the persistence of Southeast Asian American students?
4. What role does campus personnel contribute to the persistence of Southeast Asian American students?

In this chapter, the four research questions are addressed to allow for discussion of conclusions and implications of the study, as well as, recommendations for practice and for future research.

Discussion

Community colleges are a critical part of the post-secondary education system. Since its inception at the turn of the 20th century, the community college's purpose has been to offer opportunities of higher education and growth for people who otherwise could not otherwise attend college. Almost half of the undergraduates in the United States attend community college,

providing open access to post-secondary education, preparing students to transfer to four-year universities, providing workforce development training and skills training and offering non-credit programming such as English as a Second language (ESL) courses, skills retraining and community enrichment (AACC, 2015). The value and opportunities community colleges offer has increasingly become recognized so much that President Obama and his cabinet have established special initiatives to encourage people to pursue educational opportunities at the community college in order to fill in much needed gaps in the United States' workforce (Whitehouse.gov, 2015). Unfortunately, completion rates for community college students are low. According to the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC), full-time students are graduating at 57% within six years, either from the college they initially began their studies or another college (2015). The graduation rate for all community college students within six years is 39% (AACC, 2015).

Contrasting the low graduation rates, American Association of Community College (AACC) reports high rates of minorities enrolled among all groups (2015). Of the 45 percent of undergraduates that are enrolled in community college, 56 percent are Hispanic, 48 percent are black, 44 percent are Asian (AACC, 2014). Growth in Asian American and Pacific Island student enrollment is growing faster in community college than in the four year universities and growth for this group is fastest in the Midwest and the South (CARE, 2008). Between 1990 and 2000, CARE (2008) found that Asian American and Pacific Island student enrollment in public two year colleges increased 73.3 percent compared to a 42.2 percent increase in public-four year colleges and a 53.4 percent increase in private four-year colleges. And, between 1990 and 2000, two-year college enrollment of Asian American and Pacific Island students increased by 86.0

percent in the South and 75.2 percent in the Midwest, compared to 56.4 percent in the West and 59.3 percent in the Northeast (CARE, 2008).

However, educators and policymakers are large unaware of this growth due to the assumption that Asian American and Pacific Island students exist only in selective four-year universities (CARE, 2008). These trends indicate that there is a need for further investigation and research to examine the experiences and to determine the educational needs and services for these students, not only to benefit the college experiences of this population but to fill the workforce gap troubling the country and to advance American society as whole.

Implications, Recommendations and Conclusions

The study explored the contributing factors of persistence through two different lenses. The first lens for analysis was Astin's (1993) Theory of Involvement which included his IEO model and five postulates for involvement. The second lens for analysis was Critical Race Theory and the five tenets that have emerged from Critical Race Theory for use in higher education. Based upon and according to the research findings driven by the four research questions, the following implications and recommendations are proposed.

Research Question 1: What Academic Factors Contributed to the Southeast Asian American Students' Decision to Attend and Persist in Community College?

Conclusion. Based on the study's findings, the factors that contributed to the participants' decision to attend and persist were related indirectly to academics. It can be concluded that the participants' decision and experiences are affected by their inputs as Astin (1999) suggests in his I-E-O model. Low tuition cost and close proximity to home were the major reasons for the participants' decision to enroll in community college. A few of the participants also earned scholarships to attend their community college which helped to settle

their decision. Because these students were either first or 1.5 generation college students, the low tuition cost and location near home helped student to transition from high school to college and explore career and/or major options before transferring to a more costly four-year university. These reasons echo other student populations for enrolling in community college but are usually obscured by assumptions created by the model minority myth, upon which Critical Race Theory's tenet centrality of experiential knowledge helps expose.

Implication. The four year university is not the only entry point of higher education for Asian American students. Community college is the most viable choice because for Southeast Asian American students because of their typical middle to lower class socioeconomic status and first generation college student status. Low tuition cost and close proximity to home and the wide range of class offering to allow for career/major exploration were the top reasons of the students to choose community college.

Recommendations. Community colleges can make their campuses more conducive to a successful Asian American student experience by:

- Developing an orientation specifically targeting Asian American and Pacific Island students
- Purposefully marketing and recruiting this population to enroll in community college
- Training and educating academic advisors on the needs and challenges of this population for more purposeful and effective advising

Research Question 2: How Do Co-Curricular/Extra-Curricular Activities Contribute to the Persistence of Southeast Asian American Students?

Conclusion. Based on the study's findings, it can be concluded that co-curricular/extra-curricular activities can have a positive effect on Southeast Asian American students'

persistence. The participants who partook in activities commented on their appreciation of connecting with other students and staff and participating in events that benefitted the campus and community as well as how it helped enhance their academic experience as asserted by Astin (1999) in his Theory of Involvement. However, not participating in co-curricular/extra-curricular activities did not affect persistence negatively.

Implication. Participating in co-curricular activities had a positive effect on Southeast Asian American students but not participating in co-curricular activities did not have a negative effect on persistence; however, those who did not participate admitted to wanting to if they did not have to work or if they were not in an intense academic program, like nursing.

Recommendations. Recommendations based on answers to Research Question 2 are as follows:

- Community colleges can help students better engage on campus by providing more on-campus job opportunities
- Faculty and staff can re-educate themselves through in-service training to discuss and develop programming to address challenges for Southeast Asian American students.
- Academic advising should also have in-service retraining on how to better advise this population
- Colleges can actively and purposely recruit Southeast Asian American and Pacific Island students to participate in student government to encourage student leadership for this group.

Research Question 3: What Role Does Family Contribute to the Persistence of Southeast Asian American Students?

Conclusion. Based on the study findings, parents are an especially important and influential part of the participants' academic decisions. Parents play a significant part on the students' decision to pursue college and also, in their persistence. In addition, several participants expressed that their parents were also a source of stress as there was pressure not only to complete college, but also to pursue the career path their parents wanted that did not align with their interests.

Implication. Family, particularly, parents, have a strong influence on Southeast Asian American's decision to attend college and parental expectation has a strong role in the student's persistence.

Recommendations. Recommendations based on answers to Research Question 3 are as follows:

- Host family night/orientation at the start and throughout the semester to bring students and family together to learn about programs, activities and resources
- Since most of these students are either first generation/1.5 generation college students, provide workshops or special events that educate parents about the college experience and how it may affect their student

Research Question 4: What Role Does Campus Personnel Contribute to the Persistence of Southeast Asian American Students?

Conclusion. Based on the study's finding, campus personnel are an important aspect of the participants' college experience. Although, many of the students expressed that oftentimes, they would avoid staff like academic advisors or even faculty because they either felt

uncomfortable or deemed the staff member as unhelpful. However, the students who describe a bond with a staff or faculty member described how they felt connected with the personnel and the ways in which that person helped them in their college journey.

Implication. Campus personnel can make or break a student's college experience. Asian American students will only seek out help from a campus personnel, albeit an academic advisor or a professor, only if he/she views that person as approachable, knowledgeable and willing to help.

Recommendations. Community colleges can help Southeast Asian American students feel more comfortable with campus personnel by employing the following:

- In-servicing/re-educating staff members who interact with students such as academic advisors, club advisors, and faculty
- Develop and present workshops for staff and faculty focused on how to relate better with Southeast Asian American students
- Develop and facilitate campus organizations and events that help Southeast Asian American feel more included
- Hire and provide more Southeast Asian American staff and faculty to reflect the student population
- Colleges can host a focus group to gain insight on this population's college experiences, challenges and needs in order to determine programming and resources for support

Recommendations for Future Research

This study focused on a small sample in urban and suburban community colleges in Illinois. Because this study was participatory, it consisted of 10 participants, with a gender ratio of four males and six females. The participants' ethnic background varied from several Southeast Asian

countries, with a majority of the students' origins hailing from the Philippines. In addition, the participants' declared majors and immigration patterns were diverse. Many revelations arose as the researcher analyzed the data of the study which incited inspiration for future research. The following are suggestions for future research as prompted from this study:

- Broaden the research to a national level and include community colleges in multiple states, especially states that are experiencing significant growth in Southeast Asian American students over the past decade.
- Further investigate factors that influence Southeast Asian American students' decision to reverse transfer into community college experience and their overall persistence at the community college level towards completion and/or transfer back to the four-year university.
- Further investigate the contributing factors for Southeast Asian American students who do not actively participate in co-curricular/extra-curricular activities and persistence.
- Further investigate the relationship between Southeast Asian American students and academic advisors and the impact of this relationship on persistence.

Recommendations for Dissemination of Findings

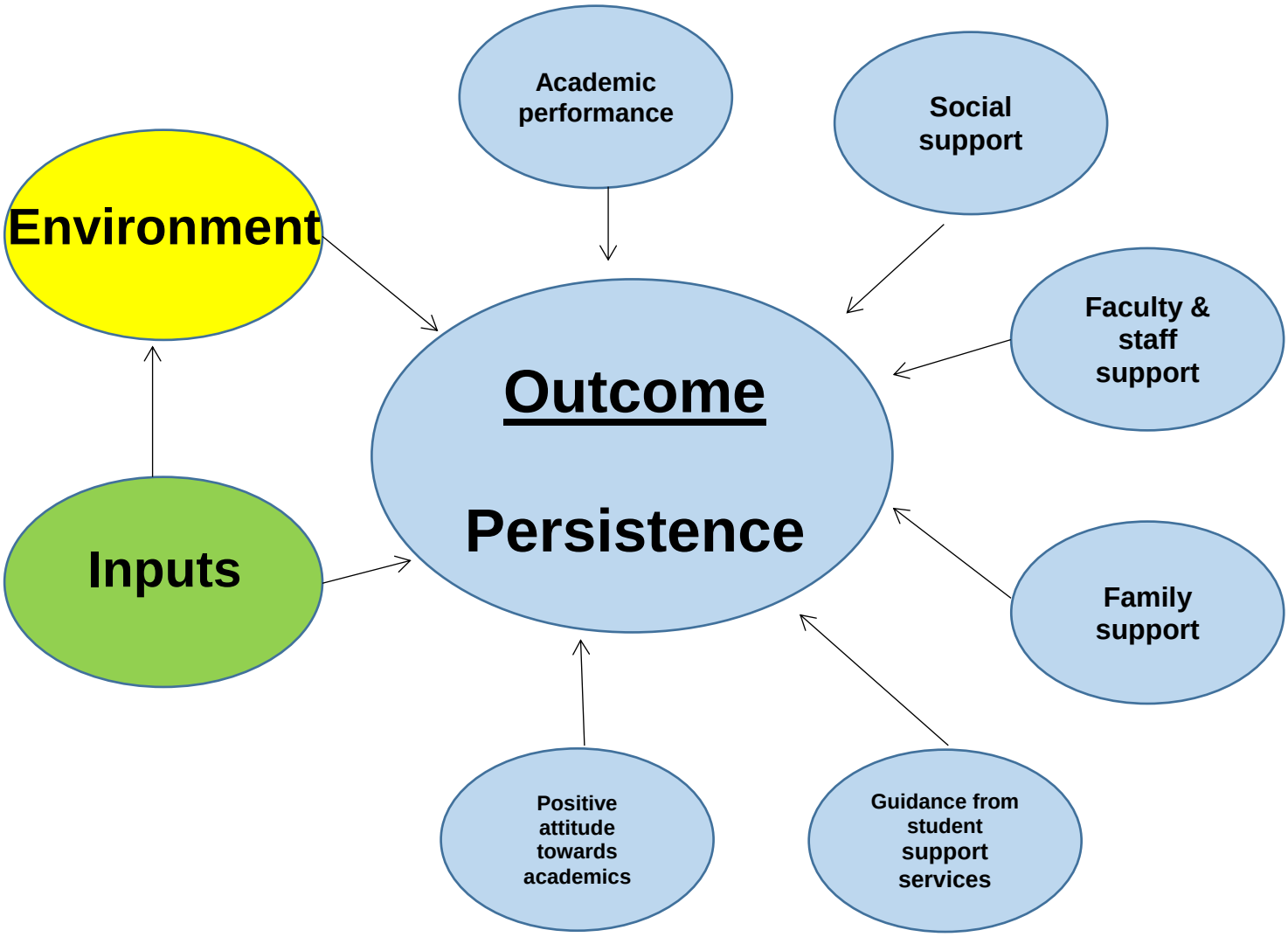
These research findings and analysis could be of interest to administrators of community colleges and universities, especially those community colleges in the Midwest and South who are experiencing a surge in Asian American and Pacific Island students that have not been previously experienced (CARE, 2008).

The research can be disseminated at conferences, seminars and high school recruitment events. Similarly, the research can be published in journals and newsletter. No longer can Asian American/Pacific Island students be cast aside and assumed they do not need support since they

are the fast growing population in the U.S. and are increasingly enrolling in community colleges around the nation. It is the hope of the researcher that this study will improve the retention and complete rates of Southeast Asian American community college students; consideration of the findings can inspire decision-makers to gain an increased understanding of this underserved group and design effective support programming.

Vann Model for Persistence

Figure 3. *Vann Model for Persistence*



The Vann Model for Persistence was derived from a compilation of the literature interviews, surveys and analysis of the data. It was also inspired by Astin's (1999) I-E-O model. Inputs refers to personal qualities the student brings to an education program, including initial developed talent and ability (Astin, 1993, p. 18). The following are examples of student inputs are: demographic information, educational background, political orientation, behavior pattern, degree aspiration, reason for selecting an institution, financial status, disability status, career choice, major field of study, life goals, and reason for attending college (Astin, 1993). The input data of a student is important input variables, because it directly influences the environment and the outcome. Thus, input influences outcome in two ways, one that is direct and one this indirectly related through environment. Environment refers to the actual experience of the student during college or the educational program. The program, personnel, curricula, instructor, facilities, institutional climate, courses, teaching style, friends, roommates, extra-curricular activities, and organizational affiliation are examples of environmental factors (Astin, 1993). The outcome refers to the "talent" the education program is trying to develop (Astin, 1993). Grade point average, exam scores, course performance, degree completion, and overall course satisfaction are all indicators of outcome measures. In the Vann Model, persistence is the outcome to be measured and the following are elements that are contributing factors to persistence: academic performance, social support from peers, faculty and staff support, family support, purposeful guidance from student services like academic advising, financial aid, counseling and career counseling, and positive attitude and commitment towards academics.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Interview Consent Form

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study that will take place from March 2011 to August 2012. This form outlines the purposes of the study and provides a description of your involvement and rights as a participant.

I consent to participate in a research project conducted by Genda Vann, a doctoral student at National-Louis University located in Chicago, Illinois.

I understand that this study is entitled Model Minority Mismatch: An Exploration of Contributing Factors for Persistence among Southeast Asian American Students in Community Colleges. The purpose of the study is: to examine the relationship between persistence and student involvement of Southeast Asian American students in Illinois community colleges.

I understand that my participation in the interview will last no more than one hour in length with a possible second, follow-up interview lasting no more than one hour in length. I understand that the researcher will provide me with a $20 gift card to be used at Target. I understand that I will receive a copy of my transcribed interview at which time I may clarify information.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and can be discontinued at any time without prejudice until the completion of the dissertation.

I understand that only the researcher, Genda Vann, will have access to a secured file cabinet in which will be kept all transcripts, taped recordings, and field notes from the interview(s) in which I participated.

I understand that the results of this study may be published but my identity will in no way be revealed.

I understand that in the event I have questions or require additional information I may contact the researcher: Genda Vann, 29 Ashland Ave, River Forest, Illinois 60305, USA
(708) 334-5650, Email address: genda.vann01@my.nl.edu

If you have any concerns or questions before or during participation that you feel have not been addressed by me, you may contact my Primary Advisor and Dissertation Chair: Dr. Dennis Haynes, National Louis University, 122 South Michigan Avenue, Chicago, Illinois, 60603, 312-261-372; Email address: Dennis.Haynes@nl.edu

Participant's Signature _____ Date_____
Researcher's Signature _____ Date_____

Appendix B: Confidentiality Agreement – Data Transcription

This confidentiality form articulates the agreement made between Genda Vann, the researcher, and [NAME OF INDIVIDUAL AND COMPANY OF A PROFESSIONAL TRANSCRIBER].

I understand and acknowledge that by transcribing the audiotapes provided to me by Genda Vann, that I will be exposed to confidential information about the research study and the research participants. In providing transcription services, at no time will I reveal or discuss any of the information of which I have been exposed.
In addition, at no time will I maintain copies of the electronic or paper documents generated. Further, upon completing each transcription, I agree to provide the electronic and paper documents to the researcher:

Genda Vann
29 Ashland Ave
River Forest, Illinois 60305 USA
(708) 334-5650
Email address: genda.vann01@my.nl.edu

I understand that a breach of this agreement as described above could result in personal and professional harm to the research participants for which I will be held legally responsible.

Transcriptionist's Signature _____ Date_____

Researcher's Signature _____ Date_____

Appendix C: Question Matrix for Student Participants

Guiding Question: What are the contributing factors of persistence for Southeast Asian American community college students?

Guiding Questions	Interview Questions
What academic factors contributed to the Southeast Asian American students' decision to attend and persist in community college?	1. Why did you choose this college? 2. What do you plan on majoring in? 3. What subjects are you most interested in? Why? 4. What subjects are you least interested in? Why? 5. What do you hope to accomplish from studying in this college?
How do co-curricular/extra-curricular activities contribute to the persistence of Southeast Asian American students?	1. How involved are you in campus activities? 2. What motivated you to get involved in campus activities? 3. What aspects of being involved on campus activities do you like most? 4. If you're not involved, what is preventing you from participating?
What role does family contribute to the persistence of Southeast Asian American students?	1. Is your family/relative/spouse supportive of your education? If yes, please give examples of how they show support? If not, what is their reason(s) for not being supportive? 2. Do you have siblings or relatives attending or have attended college in the past? If yes, do they assist you when you need help in school? If yes, please give examples how they help? If not, why? 3. What is the highest level of education of your parents? How has your parents' education affected your education goals?
What role does campus personnel contribute to the persistence of Southeast Asian American students?	1. How often and for what reason(s) do you talk to campus personnel such as counselors, deans or club

	advisors? 2. If you need assistance with your studies, financial aid, or personal issues who do you seek out on campus? 3. Do you belong to a program on campus that provides academic/mentoring support? If yes, what program and support do they give you? 4. How comfortable do you feel seeking help from campus personnel when needed? 5. In your experience, how helpful do you feel campus personnel are? Explain. 6. How often and for what reason(s) do you talk to your professors outside of class? 7. In your experience, how comfortable do you feel seeking help from your professors when needed? 8. How productive is your interaction with your professors when you meet with them?

Appendix D: General Background Survey (On-line)

Part I: GENERAL BACKGROUND

1) What is your gender? Circle: 1) Male or 2) Female
2) Please state your ethnic identification:_____
3) What is your date of birth:_____
4) What is your citizenship status? a) U.S. Citizen b) Permanent Resident c) Neither
5) What was your birthplace? (indicate city and state)_____
6) If born outside of U.S., at what age did you arrive in U.S?_____
7) Please list all the languages spoken at home:_____
8) At what age did you learn English: _____
9) Did you ever take English as Second Language (ESL) classes?
   a) Yes
   b) No
10) Are you the primary household member?
   a) Yes
   b) No
11) If you answered no to question #10, who is the primary household member?
   a) Mother
   b) Father
   c) Other, Please state whom: _____
12) Do you receive financial assistance and/or grants/scholarships?
   a) Yes
   b) No
13) Did your mother graduate college?
   a) Yes
   b) No
14) Did your father graduate college?
   a) Yes
   b) No
15) Do you have other siblings or relatives currently attending college?
   a) Yes
   b) No

Part II: EDUCATION AND ASPIRATIONS

16) Circle the answer that best describes your overall college grade point average.

a) D+ or below	d) C+	g) B+
b) C-	e) B-	h) A-
c) C	f) B	i) A or A+

17) What is your program of study or major? (Please fill in blank. If undecided, please state "undecided")_____

18) What degree do you hope to achieve?

a) Associate in Applied Science
b) Associates in General Studies
c) Certificate
d) GED
e) Undecided.
f) Associates of Arts in Teaching
g) Associates in Fine Arts
h) ESL
i) Transfer

19) Do you work while you are attending college?

a) Yes
b) No

20) If you answered yes to question #19, please indicate the number of hours you work:

a) 0-5
b) 5-10
c) 10-15
d) 15-20
e) 20-25
f) 25-30
h) 30-35
g) 35+

21) Please select one of the following:

a) I graduated high school
b) I received my GED

22) How did you decide to attend this community college?

Reputation of the campus
High school advisor counsel
Parent's or guardian's suggestion
Issues of the costs
Location; close to home
If other reason, please state:
_____

23) What are your plans for after community college?

Find work in my area of study
Transfer to four-year university
Volunteer/Internship
Other, please state:
_____

24) How often do you talk/interact with your teachers/professors outside of class?

1-3 times per semester
4-6 times per semester
6+ times per semester
0 times a semester

25) How accessible and approachable are faculty members in this college?

Very accessible and approachable
Fairly accessible and approachable
Not accessible and approachable at all

Thank you for your time!