

Diaspora: An Alternative Theoretical Framework for Understanding Chinese and Taiwanese Americans families and their Educational Experiences

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In this article, I attempt to answer the question “What accounts for the high academic performance of Chinese and Taiwanese American students?” by reviewing and criticizing the contemporary streams of scholarship in the educational literature of Sociology, Anthropology, and Psychology. I argue that the future of Chinese and Taiwanese American (Asian American hereafter) research on educational achievement, transition to college, and family interactions would benefit from a *diaspora* approach (Lukose, 2007). These include research on the effect of globalization and new technological socialization media on families, the implications of immigration histories of parents for parental involvement and children’s educational development, how adolescents and their immigrant parents understand the U.S. educational opportunity context, and the range of ways that children and parents define culture and identity. Doing so will help prepare the educational leaders and practitioners in the U.S. for a globalized world.

Introduction

Studies of racial and ethnic disparities in K-12 education indicate that Asian-American students frequently outperform other racial groups in their GPA, standardized tests, and math SAT scores (Sakamoto, Goyette, & Kim, C., 2009; Kao & Thompson, 2003). Asian-American students are more likely to enroll in AP courses (Fuligni, 1997) and have a higher rate of college enrollment and completion, and pursue further education more frequently than their white counterparts (Kao & Thompson, 2003; Louie, 2004). Their academic excellence, high socioeconomic status, and realization of the American Dream have earned Asian-Americans the label of “model minority.”

The “model minority” ideology suggests that cultural factors contribute to Asian-Americans’ academic success (Hirschman & Wong, 1986; Stevenson & Stigler, 1992). Many researchers who study Asian-American immigrant families and educational achievement explain achievement outcomes as the product of parents’ cultural values and behaviors (Chao, 2000; Kao, 2004; Zhou & Kim, S. S., 2006). In other words, family plays a decisive role in Asian-American children’s academic achievement. However, what accounts for the educational success of Asian-Americans? And what exactly is it like inside an Asian immigrant family in terms of parental cultural transmission, children’s reception, and parent-child interactions?

The explanations of the educational experiences of Asian-Americans can be subsumed under three main categories. I begin by reviewing three contemporary streams of scholarship (theoretical and empirical literature) that explain the high academic performance of Asian-American students. Then, I point out that these perspectives are not sufficient to explain the educational trajectories of Asian-Americans and at least two

types of research are required. Next, I propose an alternative theoretical framework “diaspora” and explain how using the *diaspora* lens can help us understand better the complex dynamic of Asian American family educational experiences. At the end, I discuss the implications for the preparation of educational leadership.

Ethnic Cultural Explanations for Asian-American Educational Success

The ethnic cultural approach seeks to identify the elements of a culture that foster or discourage achievement and attainment. Proponents identify *culture* as immigrants’ pre-migration cultural values, beliefs, and practices which are taught and learned within the context of family (Pearce, 2006). It particularly emphasizes immigrant parents’ cultural resources that foster or promote their children’s academic success. Through these shared cultural values, norms, and beliefs, “members of the group form an affinity and identity” (Pearce, 2006, p. 78). In this section, I will review the ethnic cultural explanation for Asian-American academic success and then provide empirical critiques.

The cultural argument emphasizes the Asian- immigrants’ specific values and beliefs of their homelands, which are considered as helping children of Asian immigrants to succeed upon their settling down in the United States (Louie, 2004; Zhou & Kim, 2006). The identifiable cultural traits that facilitate success include high achievement value and orientation, family honor and socially-oriented success (Pearce, 2006; Zhang, 2008), hard work and effort to learn (Goyette & Xie, 1999; Schneoder & Lee, 1990; Stevenson & Stigler, 1992), self-discipline, obedience, and respect for authority (Chao, 1994; Hao & Bonstead-Bruns, 1998; Sue & Okazaki, 1990). This cultural model then highlights the importance of the role of parenting that transmits these values and norms to their children, and the subsequent responses of the children to parental cultural transmission (Chao, 2000; Louie, 2001; Noguera, 2004). As a result, those success-oriented cultural characteristics are carried on from generation to generation.

Empirical studies on Asian-immigrant family literature confirm the role of parenting as an important source of support and control in the formation of children’s high educational aspiration (Gorman, 1998; Mau, 1997; Ng, Lee, S. S., & Pak, 2007; Qin, 2008). For example, based on summarizing multiple research findings on Vietnamese-immigrant children, Bankston and Zhou (2002) find that immigrant parents attempt to establish a stable family life in the new country by placing high expectations on their children, using upward-mobility oriented communication with their children, and assuring their children achieve high grades at school.

While researchers investigate how Asian-American parents foster and promote the academic success of their children, they found that Asian-American parents’ specific parenting styles (e.g., authoritarian parenting style) actually carry distinguishing cultural traits (Chao, 1994; Chao, 2000; Pearce, 2006). For example, conducting a qualitative cross-cultural study comparing the parenting styles of 64 European American parents and 123 immigrant Chinese parents, Chao (2000) identified Chinese-specific cultural concepts of “training” and “control” that differ greatly between Chinese and Western parenting styles. As Chao (2000) explained, the concepts of “training” involve “training

children early to be self-disciplined and hard-working while also providing children with a familial investment, concern, and support” (p. 348). The other notion of “parental control” requires that “children behave in ways that bring honor and respect to the family and that show concern for the family” (p. 347). Through the cross-cultural comparative study, Chao’s cultural explanations helped to understand better how the role of Asian-American parenting functions in the school success of their children.

Empirical Critiques of Ethnic Cultural Explanations

These cultural explanations suggest that families rely on their ethnic cultural traits as a means of coping with the host society and the education system. In other words, immigrant parents systematically impart their pre-migration cultural values and attitudes to children and children gradually absorb these values and beliefs. Furthermore, these family members pass those unique features of their homeland culture on from generation to generation. Such cultural arguments have been criticized and challenged for several misleading notions.

First, proponents of this cultural explanation ignore the heterogeneity that exists within the Asian-American group. In the United States, Asian-Americans are highly heterogeneous in terms of ethnicity, culture, religious affiliation, language background, nation of origin (Lee, 2009; Min, 2006). At the same time, members within each Asian-American subgroup are diverse in socioeconomic status (SES) and educational attainment in their original countries. They also have very different immigration histories, settlement experiences, and bimodal educational trajectories (Goyette, 1999; Louie, 2004; Maramba, 2008; Min, 2006; Teranishi, Ceja, Antonio, Allen, & McDonough, 2004; Pang & Cheng, 1998). Therefore, the cultural explanation masks the diversity within this population.

Second, the cultural thesis largely emphasizes the achievement orientation of a monolithic Confucian culture. Such a perspective fails to acknowledge that Confucian heritage is only shared among people from East Asian and some Southeast Asian countries. So, the Confucian legacy cannot be applied to all Asian-American ethnic groups (Sakamoto, Goyette, & Kim, 2009). Further, if Confucianism is the explanation, we should expect that Confucian immigrants in other diasporic communities are labeled as another model of academic success by their host countries such as Great Britain or Australia (Pearce, 2006)-- because these Confucian immigrants should also realize higher levels of academic achievement than other racial/ethnic groups in these nations.

Third, the cultural explanation does not adequately take into account the historical context of the demands of the contemporary US labor market. That is, it fails to acknowledge the structural context that shapes Asian immigrant parents’ high aspirations and particular strategies to help their children (Louie, 2001; Kao, 1995; Kao & Tienda, 1995; Sue & Okazaki, 1990). In the case of Chinese Americans, ethnic culture alone does not explain why Chinese Americans’ record of academic success did not begin to show until after the post-1965 immigration law (Louie, 2001; Pearce, 2006). Nor does it adequately explain why Chinese immigrant parents seriously encourage their children to take science-focused majors (Hill, Ramirez, & Dumka, 2003).

Last, the cultural argument posits that ethnic cultural traits and related behavioral patterns are intrinsic to a group-- prior to its migration. It suggests that Asian-American ethnic culture and identities are unchanging and the ethnic-heritage culture is persistently shared among members of Asian immigrant families (Zhou & Kim, 2006). These cultural traits allow these members to inculcate an appreciation of academic achievement as an avenue for social and economic upward mobility in the U.S., thereby assuring the continuity of cultural transmission across generations (Fukuyama, 1993; Kwak, 2003). This conceptualization of culture is overtly deterministic, treating culture as static and individuals as passive bearers of fixed cultural values shared within their group (Warikoo & Carter, 2009). In particular, the cultural thesis downplayed human agency and overlooked any forms of parents' adaptation or children's resistance in response to the structural barriers of the host society (Portes & Zhou, 1993; Zhou & Kim, 2006).

In summary, the ethnic cultural thesis stresses that parental cultural resources imported from their homelands shape their high educational aspirations and parenting strategies that foster children's academic success. It further treats children as passive receivers of their parents' ethnic culture. Basing conclusions on such specific Asian cultural beliefs and practices limits our understanding of how economic or social structural barriers influence the educational trajectories of Asian Americans. As a result, the cultural approach alone can-not fully account for Asian-American academic success.

Structural Explanations for Asian-American Educational Success

The structural perspective explains the patterns of inter-race differences in educational and occupational achievement by focusing on economic structural constraints and limiting opportunities within the U.S. class and racial stratification systems (Ngo & Lee, 2007). Structural factors include elements that either block an immigrant group's educational access to upward social mobility or enhance its educational achievement and attainment (Pearce, 2006). To be specific, such structural components include a group's pre-migration SES, immigrants' skills, and the structural demands of the contemporary U.S. labor market (Cheng & Bonacich, 1984). In this section, I discuss the structural explanation of immigration selectivity of post-1965 (Louie, 2001; Pearce, 2006) for Asian-American academic success and then provide empirical critiques.

Scholars holding the structural perspective argue that the exceptional educational achievement among Asian immigrant children can-not be simply attributed to the values Asian-immigrant parents place on education, but to their more advantageous class background. After World War II, given the sudden demand in the U.S. economy for scientific and technical personnel, many highly-educated or well-trained professionals from Asia migrated to the U.S. and filled this need. The structural explanation attributes the high levels of Asian-American achievement to this selectivity--a product of the Immigration Act of 1965 (Hirschman & Wong, 1986; Sakamoto, Goyette & Kim, 2009; Xie & Goyette, 2003).

Immigration selectivity scholars explained that Asian immigrants of the post-1965 tend to have high SES and high educational attainment in their countries of origin. Numerous studies report that Asian-American parents persistently use their resources to

enhance their children's education by such means as providing computers, encyclopedia or books at home (Hao & Bonstead-Bruns, 1998; Kao, 1995), offering a place to study at home (Kao, 1995), making parental savings for college (Kao, 2002), investing in private lessons (Schneider & Lee, 1990), or hiring private tutors to help their children's schoolwork (Lew, 2007; Louie, 2001). Therefore, this perspective suggests that Asian-immigrant parents' advantageous class background and financial capacity undoubtedly provide sufficient educational resources for their children and help to propel their children to high levels of educational competitiveness (Louie, 2001; Sakamoto, Goyette & Kim, C. H., 2009; Sun, 1998; Xie & Goyette, 2003).

Empirical Critiques to Structural Explanations.

The structural perspective explains the academic success among Asian-American students as a result of their immigrant parents' pre-migration and post-migration SES, shaped by the structural demand of the U.S. for high skilled labors in 1960s. The educational and financial resources of these Asian-immigrant parents allow them to provide adequate educational resources for their children and thus promote their children's academic success. The structural argument, however, has several limitations.

First, the structural explanation of immigration selectivity does not apply to all Asian ethnic groups. Not all Asian Americans are highly skilled immigrants. Taking immigrants from Southeast Asia, most of them came to the U.S. as political refugees after the Vietnam War and with little economic or educational resources (Kim, R. Y., 2002). The structural thesis also fails to recognize similar high poverty rates which exist among Cambodian (21.7%), Chinese (13.6%), Laotian (15.9%), Korean (15.2%), Malaysian (13.9%), and Vietnamese (15.4%) Americans (Sakamoto, Goyette, & Kim, C., 2009). Furthermore, in the case of Chinese Americans, despite today's image of Chinese immigrants as highly-skilled professionals and their children as academic stars, this population is highly stratified by economic class (Louie, 2004; Zhou, 2006). Thus there is substantial within-group variation in terms of levels of parental education and occupation, family income, and children's academic performance (Louie, 2001). The structural perspective can-not explain how the role of social class may influence Asian-American (or Chinese-American in particular) educational experiences and attainment in terms of parental expectations, strategies, and investment in their children's schooling (Louie, 2001).

Second, the structural explanation fails to explain why the role of parents' low SES characteristics does not impart negative effects on students' academic performance in all groups (Haller & Portes, 1973). For example, Vietnamese-American children often have low levels of parental education, family income, and unstable family structures, but they are found to consistently perform well and achieve high test scores (Zhou & Bankston III, 1998; Xie & Goyette, 2003). In this case, the structural argument downplays human agency and ethnic culture in the social mobility process. The structural perspective consequently fails to recognize any forms of resistance that active student subjects or strong ethnic communities may take in response to the structural disadvantages within the host society (Warikoo & Carter, 2009).

Last, the structural thesis can-not explain why the advantage of being Asian-American in exceptional academic achievement declines across the immigrant generations (Kao & Tienda, 1995; Sakamoto, Goyette, & Kim, 2009). Some studies find that by the third and later generations, Asian-American educational performances measured by grades and test scores present little difference from their white counterparts' (Goyette & Xie, 1999; Yang, 2004). In particular, the structural perspective fails to inform us that why and how an upward straight-line pattern of improving educational and occupational attainments across the generations occurred in some Asian ethnic groups but a downward pattern was found in others (Sakamoto, Goyette, & Kim, 2009).

In summary, although the structural proponents recognized the role of parental high expectations in the upward social mobility process among Asian Americans, they attribute these high aspirations to a result of immigration selectivity, favorable parental SES resources, and Asian family cohesiveness--resulted by the immigration law of 1965 (Goyette & Xie, 1999). Building conclusions on Asian-American parents' educational and financial resources limits our understanding of how Asian immigrants' favorable SES backgrounds, ethnic culture, and the structural circumstances of the host society can interact with one another. The structural explanation further prevents us from recognizing what patterns of adaptation and social environment conducive to Asian American educational achievement can be created (Zhou & Kim, 2006). The structural perspective also fails to explore the diversity in individual or group forms of adaptation and the diversity of identities. As stated by Goyette and Xie (1999), "the socioeconomic approach is unsatisfactory as a *general* framework for explaining the educational achievement of Asian American children" (p.24).

Cultural-ecology Explanations for Asian-American Success: Migration Adaptation

The cultural-ecological explanation attempts to integrate ethnic cultural and structural analyses by emphasizing the importance of migrant groups' immigration history, ethnic community forces, and immigrant sociocultural adaptations within the structural conditions of the host society (Zhou & Kim, 2006; Ngo & Lee, 2007; Ogbu, 1987; Warikoo & Carter, 2009). In this view, *culture* operates as "a response to social structural constraints and opportunities" (Wilson, 1987, p. 61). In this section, I discuss Ogbu's cultural-ecological theory in shaping immigrants' educational aspiration, behavioral patterns, and achievement. Then, I will provide empirical critiques to the cultural-ecological explanation.

Ogbu's cultural-ecological explanation for minority student performance outlined two migrant groups with distinctive cultural frames of reference that respond to their migration history and their power relations with the dominant group in U.S. society: voluntary and involuntary minorities (Ogbu, 1987). Ogbu (1987) claimed that voluntary minorities came to the U.S. based on their free will. They migrated to the U.S. in search of improved economic opportunities and thus treated cultural and language differences "as barriers to be overcome in order to achieve their long-range goals of future employment" (Ogbu, 1987, p. 327). Such an optimistic cultural frame of minority status generates positive "community forces" in response to upward social mobility--"products of sociocultural adaptation and are located within the minority community." (Ogbu &

Simons, 1998, p. 157) Accordingly, these voluntary minorities voluntarily adjusted and assimilated themselves into the dominant culture with efforts. As a consequence, the offspring of this voluntary minority group frequently do well in school.

In contrast, Ogbu defined involuntary minorities or caste-like minorities as those who came to the U.S. by force (e.g., slavery or colonization) and have been incorporated into U.S. society against their will. In response to the historical oppression and perceived limited opportunities, the involuntary minority youths develop negative perceptions of the dominant society and of their chances for success in the labor market. The involuntary minority students treat their cultural or language differences in school as “markers of identity to be maintained, not as barriers to be overcome” (Ogbu, 1987, p. 330). As a consequence, the caste-like minority youths refuse to do well at school because they believe that achieving academic success will lead to losing their language and cultural identities (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986). Thus, these caste-like minority students frequently do poorly in school. Such a pessimistic cultural frame of minority status develops oppositional attitudes toward social mobility.

Ogbu emphasized that Asian Americans, particularly Chinese Americans, are voluntary minorities who chose to migrate to the United States for better economic opportunities and a better life than back home (Kao & Thompson, 2003; Louie, 2001; Sun, 1998). With optimistic immigration beliefs, Asian Americans viewed cultural and linguistic differences as inevitable obstacles to be overcome in the path to adopting mainstream white ways (or incorporation into U.S. society)—without worrying about losing their language or group identity. This provides Asian immigrants with motivation to work hard to succeed.

Ogbu further explained that although children of immigrants may not have a direct experience of limited opportunities or resources back home, they acquire a similar positive attitude toward U.S. society and institutions through their parents or adults in their community (Ogbu & Simons, 1998). By focusing on the importance of the “community forces” (for example, parents’ and their community’s high expectations for children and strong involvement in their children’s schooling), Ogbu claimed that Asian-American students also tend to believe that achieving occupational mobility through high educational attainment is feasible. Consequently, they frequently perform well at school (Kao & Thompson, 2003; Ngo & Lee, 2007; Ogbu & Simons, 1998; Zhou & Kim, 2006).

Empirical Critiques to the Cultural-ecological Explanation

Ogbu’s work—which highlighted the interaction of community forces and system forces (e.g., systematic discriminations) (Foster, 2004) in shaping Asian American high academic aspirations and academic success—revolutionized academic thinking about why Asian minority students do well at school. Nevertheless, Ogbu’s position has faced tremendous challenges (Carter, 2005; Erickson, 1987; Foley, 1991; Trueba, 1988).

First, Ogbu employed dichotomous typologies of ‘assimilation versus resistance’ or ‘voluntary versus involuntary minority groups’ to explore group collective identity and he ignored the fact that variations in student school performances or in cultural and

educational experiences exist not only between different racial/ethnic groups but also within groups (Carter, 2006; Trueba, 1988). Countless empirical studies have documented that not all “voluntary minorities” are high-achievers nor all “involuntary minorities” are low-achievers (Carter, 2005; Ngo & Lee, 2007; Stinson, 2011). For example, while Ogbu attached “voluntary minority” and “high achievers” as a collective identity to the Asian- American group, Ngo & Lee’s (2007) reported that variations in academic trajectories were found in Southeast Asian-American subgroups. Thus, Ogbu’s work cannot sufficiently explain within-group differences of Asian Americans in their educational achievement.

Second, Ogbu fails to acknowledge differences of modes of assimilating into the host culture and society (Portes & MacLeod, 1999). Ogbu’s work primarily focused on minorities’ interpretation and responses to their immigration history within the racial structure of the host society and the upward assimilation trajectory for Asian Americans. In response, Portes and Zhou (1993) proposed a *segmented assimilation theory* to emphasize what sector of the U.S. society children of immigrants are incorporated into will decide those children’s life trajectories. Portes and Zhou (1993) identified three possible patterns of adaptation within immigrant families: a) integrating into the white middle-class majority, which will lead to upward mobility and assimilation, b) incorporating into the inner-city underclass, which will result in downward assimilation and mobility, and c) joining their own ethnic immigrant communities, which will contribute to upward mobility and enhance ethnic awareness.

According to scholars of segmented assimilation theories, Asian-American educational success is derived from Asian ethnic communities, which provide economic resources and ethnic networks. Parents are able to get together to exchange information about the American education system as well as obtain resources for their next generation in regards to the goals of academic success and upward social mobility. Such resources include specific ethnic social structures such as ethnic-language schools or private after-school programs (Louie, 2004; Zhou & Kim, 2006). In short, Portes and Zhou’s work made Ogbu’s straight-line assimilation model less convincing.

Last, Ogbu oversimplified the context of “community forces,” which Ogbu and Simon’s (1998) refer to “products of [parents’] sociocultural adaptation and are located within the minority community” as collective responses to the structural barriers in U.S. society (p. 157). Ogbu and Simons assumed that the community forces serve as a smooth cultural transmission approach within an immigrant family. More specifically, parents indoctrinate their children with their values and attitudes towards learning dominant white ways and their high educational aspiration for their children. What follows is that children hear parents’ homeland and migrant experiences, believe in their better chances succeeding in the U.S., and thus children are motivated to work hard and perform well at school. In fact, Ogbu and Simons ignored the dynamics within the Asian immigrant families and community.

Numerous studies report intense intergenerational tensions in the assimilation or acculturation process within Asian immigrant families (Bankston, 2004; Buriel & De

Ment, 1997; Zhou, 1997). Constant issues of intergenerational conflict generally include age expectation of autonomy (Buriel & De Ment, 1997), time and effort spent on schoolwork (Zhou, 1997), gender role difference (Buriel & Ment, 1997), language use at home (Zhou, 1997), authoritarian parenting behavior (Zhang, 2008), expectations for daily activities (Gorman, 1998), and value difference in educational aspirations and attainment (Hao & Bonstead-Bruns, 1998; Tang, 2008; Yang, 2004; Zhang, 2008).

Significant scenarios of intergenerational tensions can be found in Zhou's research on Chinese immigrant family community in New York and in California for more than twenty years. Zhou (2006) illustrated a vivid generation gap between the Chinese immigrant parents and children in her studies. The Chinese immigrant parents construct their lives primarily on three goals: "To live in your own house, to be your own boss, and to send to your children to the Ivy League" (Zhou, 2006, p. 323). However, their U.S.-born children want to be American like everyone else, such as they want to be "looking cool, going to the ball games,... taking family vacations, having fun... feeling free to do whatever you like rather than what your parents tell you to do" (Zhou, 2006, p. 323). Zhou (2006) argues that children growing up in Chinese immigrant families have constantly found themselves "[straddling] two socio-cultural worlds – Chinese versus American, which is at the core of head-on intergenerational conflicts within the Chinese immigrant family" (p. 325). Once again, Ogbu's work can-not sufficiently explain the dynamics within Asian immigrant families.

All in all, Ogbu's cultural-ecological theory and the following segmented assimilation theories provided us another perspective to understand the reasons for the exceptional achievement of Asian Americans. These scholars delved into the dynamic interplay between ethnic community forces and system forces within the host society. Particularly, Zhou's work-- zoomed into Asian American family to explore family acculturation, ethnic community acculturation, and intergenerational conflicts-- enable us to better understand the dynamic of Asian-American family and the variability of their academic achievement in their assimilation process. However, scholars of immigration education should not understand *culture* as fixed values, which are developed in immigrant countries of origin and then consistently guide their behavior in the host society (Swidler, 1986). They further should not take national assimilation as "the natural and assumed horizon in the lives, experiences, and trajectories of migrant student lives (Lukose, 2007, p. 410)."

Future Direction

As the literature on Asian-American achievement and attainment has evolved, it is apparent that neither ethnic cultural variables nor structural variables in U.S. society can sufficiently address the processes or experiences of Asian Americans' adaptations to the racialized hierarchy of U.S. society. Although cultural-ecological proponents (or scholars of immigrant education) acknowledge the need to integrate ethnic cultural and the structural factors to explain the educational trajectories of Asian Americans, the attention of these scholars of immigrant education only "begin(s) and end(s) at the U.S. borders" (Skrentny, 2008, p. 71). They ignore the processes of changing globalization that may

affect immigrants' discourses of and practices of assimilation into the racialized society of the U.S.

As Skrentny (2008) explains, “globalization is producing cultural homogenization *and* heterogenization” (p. 73). Scholars of immigration and education fail to acknowledge the fact that assimilation can occur before immigrants come to the U.S. due to the impact of globalization (Skrentny, 2008). For example, with the spread of American popular culture worldwide via the expansions McDonalds, Starbucks, Hollywood movies, and the internet access, local people in other nations may be greatly influenced by the American culture--without physically being in the U.S. Similarly, with the impact of globalization, people--who have migrated to the U.S. and make effort to adapt to U.S. society—often negotiate their cultural or national belonging in relation to their country of origin and the new society. These researchers just ignore how the dynamics of identity and culture reconstruction may influence immigrant families' educational practices in the host society.

Scholars of cultural, structural, and cultural-ecological perspectives focus on questions of social incorporation into the U.S. economy and society and patterns of different groups' educational trajectories. In fact, they should not understand *culture* as static values, which was imported from immigrants' homeland and immigrants pass it on from one generation to another. As Fischer (2003) points out,

Culture is not a variable; culture is relational, it is elsewhere, it is in passage, it is where meaning is woven and renewed, often through gaps and silences, and forces beyond the conscious control of individuals, and yet the space where individual and institutional social responsibility and ethnical struggle take place. (Fischer, 2003, p. 7)

As a result, this brief synthesis of the literature points to several as yet unanswered questions that require at least two types of research.

The first type requires a focus on tracing how culture and identity in relation to homeland and the host society are negotiated, reinterpreted, and reproduced with specific Asian immigrant families. We need research that pays particular attention to how and under what circumstances parents and children are making claims about culture and identity when they interact with the structure of education in the U.S. And also, what resources do parents and children draw on to negotiate with each other and in what range?

The second involves ethnographic approaches to investigate into Asian-American families in order to document the actual everyday experiences of specific sub-group parents and children in specific opportunity contexts (Pollock, 2008). That is, the participant observation approach is needed to examine immigrant parent-child everyday interactions in order to contribute to educational achievement patterns and family educational experiences. Specifically, further research by employing participant observation is needed to document in-depth information about parent-child everyday interactions and how their educational experiences, discourses, and practices are shaped by, and in turn respond to, the educational structures of U.S. society.

In summary, this brief synthesis of the literature suggests an urgent need for further investigation of the ways that --the educational opportunities of the racialized U.S. society shape specific Asian immigrant family discourses and practices of their everyday lives; and how parents and their children interpret, negotiate, and take actions in response to their perceived opportunities.

One Possible Alternative Theoretical Framework and Study:

Using “diaspora” to Understand the College-preparation Experiences among Chinese or Taiwanese Immigrant families

The work of Ritty A. Lukose (2007) provides a path forward: a different way of imagining immigrant social and cultural worlds, and an alternative understanding of human agency, social structure, and the US education in the era of globalization. The concept of *diaspora* emphasizes the ways in which migrant people formulate hybrid identities across nation-state boundaries. Using *diaspora* enables the study to shift from the *static* views of the homeland culture versus the host culture to a *dynamic* view of culture (Brubaker, 2005; Clifford, 1994). Specifically, instead of framing immigrant education as a process of assimilation to the host country, the *diaspora* approach shifts to a more dynamic, context-specific process of cultural production through which immigrant family members negotiate a repertoire of identities, which tie to their imagined homeland and the U.S. (Lukose, 2007).

The college preparation process is chosen as a context because during these formative high school years children make their transition into adulthood. Influenced by a larger social or cultural setting, a series of changes for an adolescent at this transition to early adulthood include his or her internal cognitive and emotional adjustment relating to such issues as what social roles should be changed, maintained, or created (Schulenberg, Sameroff, & Cicchetti, 2004). These changes generate tensions when an adolescent interacts with his or her family, peer groups, and community. Thus, high school is a stage in which few children are free from experiencing a variety of psychological distresses such as achievement anxiety (Pang & Cheng, 1998; Tang, 2008), communication anxiety (Pang et al., 1998), social isolation and alienation (Rosenbloom & Way, 2004), and conflicts within peer groups and the family (Buriel & De Ment, 1997; Kim, S. Y., Chen, & Li, 2009).

For an Asian American student, the development tasks in this critical transition to college is not only about one’s identifying and pursuing his or her occupational interests (Schulenberg, Sameroff, & Cicchetti, 2004; Tseng, 2006) but also about his or her struggling with redefining his or her ethnic identity and self-esteem in the process of linguistic assimilation and cultural acculturation to the U.S. mainstream culture (Tang, 2008; Zhou & Xiong, 2005). What is more, making the transition to college and adulthood is not only challenging for Asian immigrant children but also their parents in terms of their interactions. Because of cultural differences, language barriers, or lacking K-16 schooling experiences in the U.S., Asian immigrant parents are usually unfamiliar with the American social norms, American K-16 school system, or the college

application system, which challenges parent's authoritative role in guiding their children. Children at this stage are thus more likely to have intergenerational conflict with their authoritarian parents (Buriel & De Ment, 1997; Kibria, 2002; Min, 2006). Consequently, researching the college preparation process will enable the study to focus on family educational experiences and family interactions in the process of cultural production--in terms of interpreting culture of homeland, the host culture, identity (re)formation.

The Chinese immigrant case (including immigrants from Taiwan or Hong Kong) as representing the Asian-American population is particularly well suited for two reasons. First, most studies document that immigrants from China, Taiwan, or Hong Kong have similar routes of entry into the United States-- due to the Immigration Act of 1965, where American immigration policy focused on immigrants' high-level skills and family reunions. However, what has been ignored is the factor of historical cohort differences and historical change (Elder, 1995). In other words, individuals' family trajectories are bound to historical time and reflect the cultural, economic, political conditions of those times. This lead to the questions: What important historical events have occurred in the time span between the 1960s and the 2010s in China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, and the US and how do those changes influence the immigration context? Also, how do those dramatic global changes transform the structure and experiences of these immigrant family life, family patterns of social incorporation into the US economy and society, educational trajectories, identity formation, and parenting styles? Exploring the Chinese immigration trajectories and their family educational experiences can untangle the relationship between the micro-level of immigrant individual lives and the macro-level of the host society.

Second, numerous studies report that immigrant parents from China, Hong Kong, or Taiwan claim that they have sacrificed a lot since migrating to the U.S. for their children's better future. Thus, their children's going to college is just the very start in their children's life (Louie, 2001, 2004; Ogbu & Simons, 1998; Zhou, 2006). However, we neglect the interplay of human agency and family interdependent lives in the changing times. Also, we forget that the interaction between parents and children are reciprocal, neither top-down nor bottom-up. Parents and children are different cohorts under the immigration background and social contexts. These children have different interpretations or reactions to their parents' aspirations (Zhou, 2006). As a result, focusing on the college-preparation process within Chinese immigrant families will be a productive research focus to investigate the Asian-American family educational experiences: how Asian immigrant parents and their American children interact with each other at the intersections of home culture, the US mainstream culture, identity (re)formation, and navigating the U.S. educational opportunities.

In short, we can treat navigating the U.S. college admission process in an immigrant family (1st generation immigrant parents and their 1.5 or 2nd generation American children) as an arena for complex encounters among family members' longing and belonging, perceptions of the US educational opportunities, and negotiations in the decision-making process of which college to apply or to go. By employing a *diaspora* framework, the study can explore the ways in which family members construct

knowledge, struggle, and negotiate identities by examining parent-adolescent interactional processes. Meanwhile, employing ethnographic methods (semi-structured interviews, participant observation, and informal conversation), the study will be able to document in detail the college-preparation experiences among Chinese immigrant families, capturing the specific moments when the context of culture and identity become salient in parents' and children's voices, actions, or negotiations. Reaching such deep cultural understandings of immigrant families' educational experiences and the dynamics of identity formation will demonstrate the complexities of their academic achievement patterns and trajectories.

Implications for Educational Leadership: Responses to Globalization and the Changing World

Educational leaders are experiencing challenges and opportunities from the globalization of economy, science, technology, which propel us to re-think how the preparation and practice of educational leadership can meet the needs of 21st-century U.S. schools in a global society (Brooks & Normoe, 2010). Many educational leaders may acknowledge the issues relevant to globalization, which affect their local educational practices and policies (Apple, Kenway, & Singh, 2005). However, how to connect research on globalization and education to the concept of educational leadership remains underexplored (Brooks et al., 2010). I argue that understanding the complex dynamic of Asian-American families and their college preparation can provide contemporary educational leaders a greater understanding of globalization and change; and further help them establish and sustain useful educational experiences for students and reciprocal relationship with parents.

Taking the immigration history of the Chinese immigrants for example, the migration flows to the U.S. during the period of 1960s and 2000s provide an understanding of how the global (the economic and political reforms of China and how it is related to the contemporary globalized economies) and the local forces (the US high-stakes testing and related education reforms for enhancing the U.S. global competitiveness) interact to shape the context of the immigrant family lives and students' educational experiences. In terms of explaining historical cohort differences, there are two waves of the Chinese migrants in during late 1980s and early 1990s. One wave of immigrants is largely driven by South China's poverty, with most migrants semi-literate or manual laborers (Kim, Y., 2011). Most people in this category work in local restaurants and speak very little English; they barely understand what their children learn at school or the US education system. Needless to say, these parents struggle to guide their children to overcome language or cultural barriers when their children have difficulty with navigating the mainstream culture encountered at school.

The other wave of immigrants is overwhelmingly pushed out by the fever of "leaving China" (Kim, Y., 2011) around 1990s. These migrants are the highly-educated students mostly in Beijing who directly or indirectly experienced the Tiananmen Square Massacre of 1989 (or 89 Democracy Movement), which began with student-led popular protest, claiming for political reforms in the spring of 1989; it ended up with the Chinese

government's sending troops and tanks to the heart of Beijing. Thousands of students were killed or seriously injured in this event. Out of disappointment and angry with their government, many students since then try hard to leave China. In this process, they encountered and overcame numerous legitimate barriers set by the state and finally came to the U.S. for graduate studies.

While the immigration education scholars in the U.S. believe that these Chinese immigrants came from an upper-middle class background and possess rich cultural capital, the parents of those elite students in fact experienced the Cultural Revolution during 1960s-1970s. This revolution aimed at establishing a "social class-less" communist society by uprooting the capitalist, traditional, scholarly, cultural elements from the Chinese society. As a result, this group of highly-educated Chinese immigrants started their new life in the U.S. with very few dollars in their pockets. Later on, because most of these elite students' professions are technology or science-related, they might experience the best time of the U.S. technology development movement. However, at the same time, they also experienced the "tech bubble" burst of the US in early 2000s, which even today might seriously impact their economic life and their children's educational experiences for years to come.

The above example shows the complexities within Chinese immigrant families and their immigration, educational, and occupational trajectories. Furthermore, with the on-going globalized economic boom of China in the last two decades, what we can foresee is another wave of Chinese immigrants occurs to the U.S. and most of them would be children of the officials and the wealthy people. So, within this context of increasing heterogeneity of student identities, and of changing globalized economies and rapid technology and communication advancement, educational leaders should recognize the impact of the changing globalization on the local education and schools (Miller & Miller, 2001). By so doing, it can provide educational leaders an impetus, as "emerging out of disturbances of stability" (Walters, 2012, p. 120) and help educational leaders develop "the ability to bridge cultural gaps and become global in our learning and problem-solving approaches (Miller & Miller, 2001, p. 182)."

Without an astute understanding of the Chinese immigrant history related to the changing globalization, educational leaders and practitioners run the risk of ignoring that some Asian American students might have learning difficulties, language barriers, financial difficulties, or conflicts within peer groups and with their parents —just like students of other racial groups. This gap in understanding will limit the educational resources they provide to students, which becomes particularly problematic-- especially when considering Asian-American adolescent students' educational opportunities and choices during the transition to college and adulthood.

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