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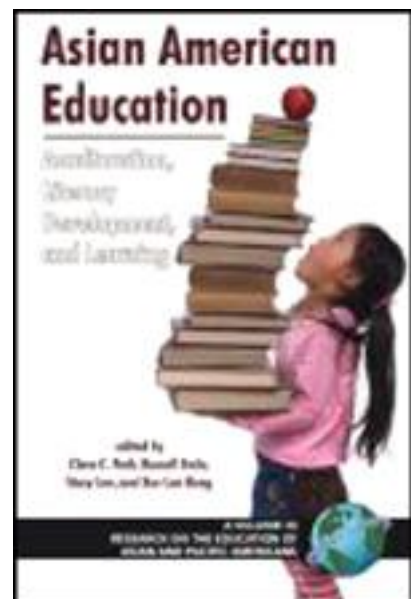
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Asian American Education: Acculturation, Literacy Development, and Learning is a collection of papers nominally about the literacy learning experience of Asian American students and how this experience facilitates their entry into American mainstream culture. Each of the nine papers in this book relates to acculturation, literacy development, or learning.

Chapter One, by Monica Chiu, focuses on the Americanization experience of some Lao American Youths. It is an ethnographic study of ten months in Millshore Junior and Senior High's English to Speakers of Other Languages room. Observation in a Millshore summer school session and interviews with nine Lao American students were conducted as well as informal chats with and interviews with the school staff, some parents, and Lao community members. The researcher finds that the Lao American students in her study adopt a media-inspired "hip hop cool" to gain "an acceptance that is intertwined with notions of assimilation and agency" (p. 15). She is concerned about "an institutional 'culture of avoidance' in which exist[s] 'sanctioned ignorance'" (p.18). Further, the author suggests that schools should try to reduce the number of cultural festivals and activities which might highlight the difference between Lao Americans and mainstream American students; rather, intellectually stimulating programs should be created to strengthen the diverse cross-student connections. This study highlights a common phenomenon among immigrant students, and investigates it with a thorough research design. Even though in some cases they only interview a limited number of participants and rely on their



reports, still it manages to present a reasonable account for the phenomenon and offers a possible remedy for it.

The second chapter, by M. Gail Hickey, is Burmese refugee's accounts of their acculturation experience. The researcher interviews twenty-two Burmese refugees in or around Fort Wayne with open-ended questions about "their childhood experiences and family life in the birth country as well as in the United States, schools, the local ethnic community, ethnic background and native language, and memories of civil or political unrest" (p. 32). The researcher discusses the profound impact that refugee camp experience might have on refugees like post-traumatic stress disorder. The author also writes about the education of Burmese families; Burmese tradition emphasizes education and achievement, while schools are often pictured with strict discipline and teacher-centered instruction. Many refugees report a cultural change in multiple aspects such as general lifestyle and religious training after coming to America. The researcher suggests that school districts should use the help of expert translators to involve parents with little or no English proficiency in their children's schooling. Meanwhile, educators should also make an effort to foster their understanding of Burmese culture to help better serve Burmese students. This study sheds light on refugees, who are a disadvantaged group. The rich information covered in this study about Burmese refugees' everyday experiences may be able to help people who work with Burmese refugees to have more understanding and sensitivity.

Chapter Three by Ji-Yeon Jo examines some Korean Youths' life histories and language experiences. In this study, 14 Korean American high school students are interviewed initially and ten of them are also given a post interview. Additional information is gathered through e-mail exchanges with participants and personal and school web sites. Field notes are also used. The researcher manages to "group the participants into four categories based on their residential status and migration history during their K-12 education" (p. 60). The results of this study indicate that a common sense of community is important for a student to flourish. The author then concludes that this requires that curricula be modified to tap into the heritage of each student as a source of communal spirit. This article uses Bourdeu's theory of cultural capital and agency to explain the significance of retaining student heritage as "heritage language can enable or limit the formation of and participation in social relationships and networks, and new social relationships can also influence the ethnic/racial sense of self and influence heritage language status and attitudes" (p. 72). Tabors and Snow (2001) point out that the language outcome and literacy development of bilingual children might be different due to the different roles of their first language and English in their life, and advise parents to use their first language for literacy activities at home because the quality of interaction is more important than the language in which the interaction takes place. Ferris and Hedgcock (2005) emphasize that "explicit instruction may be required to facilitate positive interlingual transfer" (p. 38) from first language literacy to second language literacy. The conclusions reached in this chapter are incongruous with the results of the first study in this book. While the first study emphasizes the importance of harmony, this study attempts to create a sense of community by highlighting the different heritages of students.

The fourth chapter of this book is written by Susan Adler. She gives Hmong parents and school staff surveys and in-depth interviews, examines documents about school programs and curricula, and conducts observations at two elementary schools. The survey findings suggest that parental involvement in school is low; however, these parents often wish to take part in their children's education in the home. Meanwhile, they seem to have positive ideas about schools in general. The interview data suggest that Hmong people highly value education and believe that students should do their best in school. They trust teachers' authority and presume their responsibilities for their children. However, new generations of Hmong parents might have relatively different values for numerous reasons. While Hmong students are mostly hardworking and self-motivated, they also seem to be less "assertive and self-sufficient" (p. 92) and show conceptual gaps around third or fourth grade. The researcher suggests that educators adopt a broader concept of parental involvement and recommends "a program of western cultural infusion with family members participating so that Hmong and mainstream cultures can be compared and integrated" (p. 97).

This study indicates a disparity between Hmong parental desire to participate in their children's education and their inactivity in doing so. The author gives insightful analysis and recommendations which if implemented could lead to greater success among Hmong youth.

Chapter Five, by Guofang Li, is a case study of a Vietnamese family's home environment and literacy experience in America. Three in-depth interviews with the participants – the Phan family – are conducted. Two interviews concern the parents and their views of their children's education. The other interview gains information about specific literary materials used by the family and the print material available to their children. The researcher finds that the Phan family's beliefs in education are a typical result of Vietnamese culture, while “three aspects of Vietnamese culture, appropriate gender roles, strict discipline, and high expectations, are prominent in their everyday life and their educational values” (p. 112). On the matter of home literacy practices in the Phan family, the researcher finds that the Phan parents do not have time to help their children with reading and writing. While one of their children constantly struggles with reading and learning, the other who does better with English literacy performs multiple roles in the family as a helper to the parents. The researcher calls for a child-centered strategy for schools to adopt as well as maintaining the children's first language in their daily life. Moreover, the researcher states that the connection between parents and teachers should be strengthened. This research closely examines a family's literacy practice and how culture, familial socioeconomic status, and other factors influence it. Both this study and the previous study focus on parental involvement in students' literacy education. Purcell-Gates (2000) once talks about the importance of home literacy and states that home literacy practices are “facilitative of later literacy achievement in school” (p. 858). The two studies both prescribe very helpful advice on how schools can better approach parents and understand them. Li (2006) proposes a culturally reciprocal pedagogy in which mutual understanding from both parents and teachers towards each other's literacy practice is built. If the connection between the family and school literacy practice could be established, there is no doubt that these Asian American students would benefit.

The sixth chapter, by Connie Chan, is a documentation study about how Asian Americans are treated in two United States history textbooks. This paper begins by discussing the importance of California textbook content. Then, the author attempts to analyze “the integration of ethnic content in a multicultural curriculum” (p. 137). References to “Asian Americans” are marked and rated. The authors claim their approach “measured whether and how Asian Americans were depicted in ways that challenged students to think critically and reason beyond the text” (p. 137). The researcher finds that *The Americans* manages to provide detailed insider perspective for some specific ethnical groups but fails to cover a variety of Asian American, while *The American Pageant* manages to cover a wide range of Asian Americans but fails to go into depth. The researcher suggests that there should be more representation of Filipino American World War II veterans and their omission in textbooks reflects a broader issue in social studies curriculum. The author also suggests that more expertise in Asian American experience should be used in history textbooks design. Moreover, she believes that supplemental materials can be used to enrich students knowledge acquired from textbooks. The methodology employed by this paper may not be beyond reproach. The rating of references is an inherently subjective process and the very results of the study may be more based on opinion than measurement. The fact that the authors do not define what is meant by “think[ing] critically and reason[ing] beyond the text” (p. 137) makes the author's conclusions appear less grounded.

Chapter Seven, by Grace Fung-Arto, is a pilot study of some English language learners of Chinese background who are academically at risk. This study consists of 40 students of Chinese background attending New York City public schools. Each is referred for evaluation, mostly on account of limited English skill, and is considered at risk. Each student is interviewed with a guardian or parent about their background and also takes standardized tests. The researcher finds that “the most common language weaknesses of all these students were in English vocabulary and reading comprehension skills” (p. 162). Moreover, the researcher witnesses various factors putting the students at risk like family background, educational experience. The researcher also calls for

“a school curriculum which will effectively enhance their language skills by integrating language and content instruction and learning strategies instruction” (p. 164). Moreover, teachers should develop a basic understanding towards English language learners and schools should create an inclusive atmosphere. This piece studies the profiles of some students at risk. The research design is logical and systematic. This gives the readers an opportunity to see what kind of characteristics have influences on these students’ achievements and helps the educators better understand the dynamic interplay of factors behind these students’ achievements.

The eighth chapter is by Wen Ma. This chapter is a descriptive case study of how students learn and participate in a graduate seminar through dialogues. Three Korean doctoral students in a seminar are interviewed, observed in the classroom, and interlocutors in conversations. Common traits in their cultural and educational backgrounds are observed. Then, the instructor of the seminar is interviewed. The research finds that of the three participants, one tries to read repeatedly to gain understanding to the reading, likes lecturing as a teaching style, and doesn’t like to write in English. Another has difficulty with the readings and also prefers the lecturing style, but finds that writing can help organize her thoughts and uses talking to herself as a strategy to learn. The third one cannot finish all the readings; however, he feels that his written responses to class readings are helpful in engaging himself in the class discussion. He also accepts discussion as an efficient teaching style. From all these, the researcher suggests that “culturally and linguistically diverse learners with no prior experience in class discussions need concrete suggestions and scaffolds to learn to actively participate” (p. 189). Moreover, a learning community and reflective learning can be helpful to students while discussion might not always be the most appropriate instruction form under all the circumstances. This study highlights the fact that different students may have different learning styles which may not be equally suited to certain approaches. Different cultural backgrounds can exacerbate this phenomenon. Explicit instructions appear to have a beneficial impact on this.

Chapter Nine, by Tae Chang, examines the factors that affect Asian American students choosing a College major. A study is conducted on 18 Asian American students in some required classes in a university. Two different questionnaire instruments—the Suinn-Lew Asian Self-Identity Acculturation Scale and a modified version of the Strong Interest Inventory about Asian Americans’ career – are used to determine the students’ acculturation levels and collect information about their linguistic, historical, cultural, familial, and demographic background. Individual interviews are also conducted about the impact of different factors on the choice of college majors. Through observation, the researcher finds that for natural sciences and mathematics majors, financial ambition is the most important factor. Following that is a desire for respect or prestige, while family influence seems to have the least effect. Results from questionnaires suggest a pattern that “students who indicate personal interest as the most significant factor also indicating that family influence has much less influence” (p. 210). In the end, the author calls for more support for Asian American students pursuing nontechnical and nonscientific careers, and cautions parents to “exercise discretion in advising their children” (p. 210). This paper provides an interesting account of the motivating factors for students of Asian descent who are pursuing a degree. Understanding motivations of students is useful in a wide variety of applications, from college preparation to marketing. Therefore, this paper provides helpful information to a number of disciplines.

Asian American Education: Acculturation, Literacy Development, and Learning addresses a number of important and poignant issues through its collected papers. These issues range from parental involvement in student education to the integration of ethnic groups into American culture to learning experiences in American institutions. At a broad level, the nine separate papers contained within this book are bound together by their common general subject matter of Americans of Asian descent. For focusing on this sometimes-overlooked group of students, the book is to be lauded.

However, the main criticism of this work is that beyond their focus on Americans of Asian descent, there is rather little which connects all of the disparate chapters of the book. Each of the nine chapters addresses one of the general themes of the book—acculturation, literacy development, and learning. However, these themes are not tied together nor are they formed into a unified whole. The book lacks a cogent and cohesive singular underlying theme running through each of its chapters and instead appears to be a collection of somewhat disjoint papers.

The individual papers themselves are in general thoroughly researched and of high quality. They show a broad range of research conducted in the field and a variety of scholarly methodologies. They are uniformly informative to both educators and policy makers by presenting a diverse array of issues surrounding the education of Asian American students. Thus this book is recommended and thought to be a worthwhile read.

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