

Exclusion or Contribution?
Education K-12 Policy

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Our children should not be placed in any position where their youthful impressions may be affected by association with pupils of the Mongolian race.¹

San Francisco School Board, 1905

In response to the challenge of changing demographics more than a century ago, the San Francisco School Board established a segregated Chinese Primary School for Chinese children to attend, including those who were American born. By the turn of the century after Japanese immigrants had settled in the wake of Chinese exclusion, the School Board also applied the Chinese segregation policy to Japanese students. School superintendent Aaron Altmann advised the city's principals: "Any child that may apply for enrollment or at present attends your school who can be designated under the head of 'Mongolian' must be excluded, and in furtherance of this please direct them to apply at the Chinese School for enrollment."²

Throughout their history, Asian Pacific Americans have confronted a long legacy of exclusion and inequity in relation to school policies and

practices, particularly during periods of changing demographics, economic recession, or war. In spite of historic, linguistic, and cultural differences, distinct Asian and Pacific nationalities have been grouped together and treated similarly in schools. Furthermore, Asian Pacific Americans have had little administrative control or political influence over the shaping of educational policies and school practices.

Nevertheless, Asian Pacific Americans have individually and collectively worked to overcome and redefine exclusionary policies. Legal cases brought by Joseph Tape in 1885 and Wong Him in 1902, for example, challenged the Chinese Primary School segregation policies which denied their children the right to attend neighborhood public schools.³ In the process, Asian Pacific Americans have, at times, improved conditions not only for their own communities, but expanded educational opportunities for many disenfranchised groups.

Most notably, the class action suit brought by Kinney Lau and eleven other Chinese American students against Alan Nichols and the San Francisco Board of Education in 1970 led to the historic *Lau v. Nichols* Supreme Court ruling which provided the foundation for the nation's bilingual education mandates. The court unanimously concluded in 1974:

... there is no equality of treatment merely by providing students with the same facilities, textbooks, teachers, and curriculum; for students who do not understand English are effectively foreclosed from any meaningful education.⁴

Like *Brown v. Board of Education*, the Supreme Court's decision in the *Lau* case fundamentally reformed U.S. educational policy. Thanks to the efforts of Chinese American students and parents, the educational rights of limited-English speaking students of all nationalities were formally recognized and protected.

In the two decades since the *Lau* decision, the profile of the Asian Pacific American population has changed dramatically. Demographic projections suggest that Asian Pacific American population growth and diversification will continue at least through the year 2020. What will this mean for schools and K-12 educational policy in light of Asian Pacific Americans' historic legacies of exclusion and contribution?

Demographic Changes into the 21st Century

During the 1980s, the school-age Asian and Pacific Islander population, defined as those between ages 5-19, grew by 90 percent from 929,295 to 1,761,901 in the U.S. In California and the Mid-Atlantic area of New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania, the Asian Pacific school-age population more than doubled, growing by 111 percent and 102 percent respectively.

In many local school districts, the magnitude of Asian Pacific population growth has been even more dramatic. In Lowell, Massachusetts—a city with fewer than a hundred Cambodian residents in 1980 that now represents the second largest Cambodian community in the country—the influx was so rapid that between 35 and 50 new Cambodian and Lao children were entering the Lowell public schools *each week* during 1987. In Lowell and across the country, the changing demographics of schools and society loom large as critical issues for educational practitioners and policy-makers.⁵

Their concerns, however, have tended to reflect immediate needs and crisis situations, as in the case of Lowell. Yet, educators must prepare to address these demographic trends for a sustained period of time into the next century.

According to projections developed by Paul Ong, the Asian Pacific American school-age population, which doubled between 1980 and 1990, will more than double once again from 1990 to 2020.

Ong's projections suggest that spectacular demographic growth will persist and that current K-12 educational policy issues involving Asian Pacific Americans will continue to be relevant well into the 21st century. According to population projections based on the assumption of increasing immigration, in 2020 there will be 10 percent more Asian Pacific immigrant children below the age of 15 in the U.S. and 25 percent more in California than in 1990. This is cause for serious concern, given that educational policies and practices have been unable to meet the needs of Asian Pacific immigrant students, even at current levels.⁶

Together with the large numbers of foreign-born, immigrant school-age cohorts in 2020, however, a major shift will occur in the demographic profile as the numbers of second-generation, American-born children with immigrant parents will dramatically increase. The implications of these demographic projections for educational policy are discussed below.

ETHNIC DIVERSITY AND LOCALITY

Although Ong's population totals are aggregated for all Asian and Pacific Islander groups and summarized for the U.S., California, and the Mid-Atlantic area, the significance of both ethnic diversity and locality should also be emphasized. Other demographic projections, for example, suggest that between 1980 and 2000, the rankings of the six largest Asian ethnicities will change from Chinese, Filipino, Japanese, Asian Indian, Korean, and Vietnamese to Filipino, Chinese, Vietnamese, Korean, Asian Indian, and Japanese.⁷

These changes, driven by immigration and refugee resettlement patterns as well as differential fertility rates, have important ramifications for educational policy because linguistic, cultural, and socioeconomic profiles vary widely by ethnicity. Hmong women, for example, maintain a fertility rate of nearly ten children per lifetime compared to Japanese American women whose rate is less than two.⁸ When they become available, disaggregated Asian Pacific Islander data sets from the 1990 U.S. Census will be crucial for policy-makers and community advocates to analyze in detail.

In addition, background factors within each ethnicity, such as refugee wave, generation, and gender also matter. The contrast, for example, between a first-wave Vietnamese daughter of professionals who grew up in the U.S. for most of her life and a third-wave Vietnamese son of rice farmers who came to the U.S. unaccompanied five years ago is obvious and full of implications for educators.

Locality is also important in relation to ethnicity and school policy. Asians comprise 20 percent of the school enrollments in Long Beach and Fresno, California,⁹ although Cambodians comprise the majority in Long Beach while Hmong represent the majority of Asian students in Fresno—each with distinct languages, world views, refugee experiences, and, by extension, educational needs.

Furthermore, the development and implementation of K-12 educational policy typically occurs at the local school district level, albeit within the parameters of state guidelines. The public school districts in Boston and San Francisco, for example, each serve about 62,000 students, of whom roughly eight out of ten are children of color. In Boston, however, African Americans make up 48 percent of the student body compared to

9 percent Asian Pacific Americans. In San Francisco, African Americans comprise 27 percent, while Asian Pacific Americans represent 31 percent of the total student body. The context for developing sound Asian Pacific American educational policies is obviously different in San Francisco compared to Boston, though the needs of Asian Pacific Americans in both cities are compelling.

Policy Implications

The remainder of this paper is organized thematically to focus on specific educational policy areas, including curriculum, school climate, teacher training and recruitment, language issues, assessment, support services, and parent empowerment.

CURRICULUM TRANSFORMATION

What I have learned has made a difference. Knowledge is responsibility. I have been able to share my knowledge and shed some light on my family members.

an Italian American student

I can relate a lot better to Asian students now.

an African American student

It helps me to revitalize all the memories and hardships I have gone through. . . . It is very helpful emotionally and academically.¹⁰

a Cambodian American student

Given projections that Asian Pacific Americans will continue to be the fastest growing subgroup in the nation well into the 21st century, the most important implication for educational policy is that the K-12 curriculum must provide systematic, in-depth opportunities for all students to learn about the historical experiences and contemporary realities of Asian Pacific Americans and their communities. This transformation of the curriculum differs from curricular emphases on the countries and cultures of Asia, and is imperative to implement, whether or not Asian Pacific students are present in individual classrooms.¹¹

To meet this challenge, one curricular approach may focus on the particular histories and cultural backgrounds of specific nationalities,

such as Koreans, Asian Indians, or Hmong in America. Alternative curricular strategies may focus on specific themes that cut across the experiences of various Asian Pacific nationalities in America, such as immigration, exclusion, settlement and community, labor and contribution, war and international relations, or identity and diversity.¹²

The thematic approach recognizes that various Asian groups share common experiences within the context of U.S. society. In spite of cultural and linguistic differences as well as historical conflicts between Asian and Pacific Islander nations, a distinct *Asian Pacific American* experience is well-documented by scholars.¹³ This shared experience is also reflected, albeit crudely, in comments such as “they all look alike,” or in incidents when Vietnamese are told to go back to China and Cambodians to go back to Vietnam.¹⁴

Using the thematic approach, students can also draw connections and parallels to the experiences of other groups in a multicultural curriculum. Themes such as migration, community, and the search for the American Dream are central, but not unique to Asian Pacific Americans, and can serve as the building blocks of a coherent, integrated curriculum that breaks down barriers between groups. Students learn to recognize the power of social forces such as race or class but also to appreciate various *human* qualities such as having dignity and determination to survive.

The thematic approach also facilitates the process of teaching and learning *across the curriculum* from social studies to language arts to mathematics. Research and practice in curricular reform throughout the country suggest that learning is enhanced when students explore themes in depth and make connections from the combined vantage points of several subject areas. A thematic focus on the Japanese American internment during World War II, for example, readily lends itself to lessons across the curriculum in history, writing, drama, civics, geography, health science, agricultural science, art, poetry, and math. With a common thematic focus, subject areas can reinforce rather than work in isolation from each other, and thereby create powerful learning opportunities for students.

IMPROVING SCHOOL CLIMATE

*We were coming from a meeting of the Asian Club and white students threw oranges at us. Before that we had been standing in the hall and the supervisor kicked us out. So we went outside and they threw oranges. So there is nowhere to go.*¹⁵

a California-born Punjabi girl

People, can we all get along?

Rodney King

In the aftermath of the Los Angeles riots, teachers at the Wilton Place elementary school in Koreatown reported that many of their students had witnessed family businesses being looted or burned. On the first day after school reopened, the school's nurse observed that many Korean American students requested early dismissals due to stomach pains and headaches¹⁶—showing that dynamics in the local area and larger society affect the experiences of students in schools.

During the past decade, as rapid demographic changes have threatened established interests and sharpened historic contradictions in our society, bias-related crimes against African Americans, Asian Pacific Americans, Jews, and gays have proliferated throughout the country. Hate crimes reported in 1989 grew by 42 percent in Los Angeles, 29 percent in New York City, and 22 percent in Boston.¹⁷

Although often expected to overcome problems that the society as a whole has been unable to resolve, schools typically reflect and reinforce the structural barriers and social conflicts of the environment in which they are situated. For example, a 1990 national study of high school students conducted for Northeastern University and Reebok International revealed that 57 percent of the teenagers had witnessed a racial attack and 47 percent would either join in a racial attack in progress or feel that the group being attacked deserved it. Only 25 percent said they would report a racial incident to school officials.¹⁸ Similarly, a 1991 survey of youth between the ages of 15 and 24 conducted by People for the American Way found that 50 percent of the respondents viewed race relations in the U.S. as generally bad.¹⁹ Furthermore, if these studies had taken place after the acquittal of Los Angeles police officers charged with beating Rodney King, the percentages would have likely been even higher.

In their landmark 1992 study, the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights documented numerous cases of anti-Asian violence throughout the country's neighborhoods, workplaces, and schools that were fueled by stereotypes, "Japan-bashing" and a national climate of anti-Asian violence. The report states:

The pervasive anti-Asian climate and the frequent acts of bigotry and violence in our schools not only inflict hidden injuries and lasting damage, but also create barriers to the educational attainment of the Asian American student victims, such as suspension from school and dropping out of school. . . . These consequences forebode a high price that not only the individuals involved but also our society as a whole are bound to pay in the future.²⁰

Even elementary schools are not secure. In December 1988, for example, Patrick Purdy fired over one hundred rounds from an automatic assault rifle into the Cleveland Elementary School yard in Stockton, California—killing five Cambodian and Vietnamese children. Although news reports treated him as a generic mass murderer who fired at random, witnesses said Purdy aimed specifically at Southeast Asian children. The California Attorney General concluded in his investigation that "Purdy attacked Southeast Asian immigrants out of a festering sense of racial resentment and hatred," and that Purdy had often confronted people speaking a foreign language—telling them to speak English in America.²¹

The Stockton massacre, like the racist killings of Vandy Phornng, a 13-year-old Cambodian boy in Lowell, Massachusetts, and 17-year-old Vietnamese high school student Thong Hy Huynh in Davis, California, by schoolmates,²² have been especially tragic, given that Southeast Asian refugees have already survived so much war, death and trauma in their home countries. Their children are not supposed to die here in the U.S.

As the Asian Pacific student population continues to grow rapidly, educational practitioners and policy-makers must not only develop timely, appropriate measures to respond to specific anti-Asian incidents, but more important, must address the underlying causes of violence and establish alternative environments characterized by respect and cooperation. Research has shown, for example, that the process of multicultural curriculum transformation described above not only

strengthens students' knowledge and critical thinking skills, but also improves the climate and learning environment of the school or classroom.²³

TEACHER TRAINING AND RECRUITMENT

*Your voice is one I'd heard only distantly, tokenly, the "model minority" a terrible reality, I realize in my head. . . . I somehow never saw the procession of American Indians to African Americans to Asian Americans. Now I see.*²⁴

a high school English teacher

To meet the challenge of changing demographics and enable these proposed curricular reforms, policies in the areas of teacher education and professional development must facilitate the training of current and future educators in relevant content areas and pedagogical strategies. For example, in recent years, a wide range of Asian American Studies primary source documents, oral histories, and works of historical fiction have been published. If teachers are not familiar with these resources, however, and do not have sufficient background knowledge or training to authorize Asian Pacific American voices in the curriculum, then students mistakenly believe that Asian Pacific Americans have been silent and played no role in U.S. history or society.²⁵

With significantly more Asian Pacific students entering the nation's classrooms each year, teachers and school staff must also be able to enhance student self-esteem and encourage Asian American student voices that may otherwise be silent or silenced. Many Asian students, particularly those whose first language is not English, feel self-conscious about speaking in class because of the language barrier, cultural differences, and racism. A Vietnamese high school student from Boston notes, "when I came here, I don't feel free to speak and I always think that people don't want to hear me."

The urgency for teacher training and professional development to address these issues is also intensified by policies that seek to integrate or mainstream bilingual students as quickly as possible. The impact of these trends in bilingual education (and special education) policy is that all teachers and school personnel, not just the bilingual teachers, are increasingly responsible for establishing a supportive learning environment for immigrant students in school. To do so effectively,

however, they need training.

Although the day-to-day context for addressing these issues of curriculum and pedagogy is the classroom within which individual teachers work, the larger policy issues are relevant to accreditation agencies, teacher education programs, and bodies responsible for teacher certification guidelines.

The Asian Pacific American communities must also take some responsibility, particularly in encouraging more Asian Pacific students to go into the field of education. Fifteen percent of all college students major in education compared to only 6 percent of Asian Pacific students in college.²⁶ While investing heavily in educational institutions, Asian Pacific Americans constitute only 1 percent of the teaching force nationally, and even less of the pool of school administrators, guidance counselors, educational researchers, *and policy-makers*.²⁷ The number of fully certified Asian Pacific bilingual teachers has actually declined between 1985-1990 in California, and the shortage of bilingual teachers, counselors, and aides in school districts throughout the country has reached crisis proportions.²⁸ While schools of education should do a better job of outreach and recruitment, parents and communities must take the lead in addressing this severe underrepresentation of Asian Pacific Americans in the education field.

SERVING ASIAN PACIFIC AMERICAN STUDENTS

The previous sections on curriculum, school climate, and teacher training focus on school-wide or system-wide policy concerns. The following sections examine policy areas related to meeting the specific needs of Asian Pacific American students.

Underlying these sections is a rejection of the distorted, albeit pervasive, model minority myth or "whiz kid" stereotype commonly associated with Asian American students. Many scholars have challenged the origins, validity, and consequences of the model minority image. Though not reported here, those critical analyses represent baselines for educators and policy-makers to understand and respond in meaningful ways to the realities experienced by Asian Pacific American students.²⁹

DEVELOPING A PROFILE

Few national studies on Asian Pacific American students are available to drive educational policy.³⁰ The most recent is a 1992 report that

examines language characteristics and academic achievement of 1,505 Asian Pacific eighth-graders based on the National Education Longitudinal Study (NELS:88 database) which sampled 25,000 eighth-graders in 1,000 public and private schools in 1988.³¹

Roughly 52 percent of the NELS:88 Asian sample were U.S.-born and 48 percent were foreign-born. Disaggregated by ethnicity, the sample included 20 percent Filipinos, 17 percent Chinese, 13 percent Southeast Asians, 11 percent Korean, 9 percent Pacific Islanders, 9 percent South Asians, 6 percent Japanese, and 15 percent others. Nearly three out of four students in the sample came from bilingual households, although only 12 percent indicated a high proficiency in their home language.

Among a variety of interesting findings, the study determined that socioeconomic status (SES) was associated with English proficiency and with reading and math performance levels. Of the Asian students from bilingual homes, for example, 78 percent of the high SES students had a high English proficiency compared to 50 percent of low SES students. Moreover, nearly 40 percent of the low SES students failed to achieve basic performance levels for both reading *and* math compared with fewer than 15 percent of the high SES students. In addition, when SES was controlled, students with low English proficiency were less confident about graduating from high school compared to those with greater proficiency (60 percent versus 83 percent). Confidence levels differed by ethnic group as well. For example, 86 percent of South Asians, 72 percent of Filipinos and 67 percent of Pacific Islanders were very sure about graduating from high school.

The NELS:88 study is important in empirically refuting the “whiz-kid” image that Asian Pacific students have no problems in school. It also clarifies the significance of background characteristics, including ethnicity, English language proficiency, and socioeconomic status. Furthermore, given that the NELS:88 study excluded students whose English-proficiency was judged by school personnel to be too low to complete the NELS instruments in English,³² the findings, therefore, do not account for the profiles of many recent Asian Pacific immigrant and refugee students who, according to several studies, have the lowest levels of English proficiency and socioeconomic status while facing the greatest needs in school.³³

LANGUAGE NEEDS AND LANGUAGE RIGHTS

*Before I very silenced, afraid to talk to anybody. But now when I want to say something, I say it. . . . I want to have the right to talk, speak, or vote.*³⁴

a Vietnamese student

For limited English proficient (LEP) students, bilingual education has been mandated by law since the *Lau v. Nichols* ruling by the Supreme Court in 1974. In spite of local and national political controversies surrounding language policies,³⁵ there is growing consensus among educators and researchers that a wide variety of bilingual program strategies can be effective and appropriate in promoting cognitive development and academic achievement among LEP students.³⁶ The success of two-way bilingual programs throughout the country is especially encouraging and deserves further development with Asian languages, given the potential benefits not only for large numbers of both foreign-born and American-born Asian Pacific students, but also for non-Asian students in relation to the growing social, cultural, and economic influence of the Pacific Rim nations.

However, the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, in its review of educational programs provided for Asian American LEP students, concluded:

Many Asian American immigrant children, particularly those who are limited English proficient (LEP), are deprived of equal access to educational opportunity. These children need to overcome both language and cultural barriers before they can participate meaningfully in the educational programs offered in public schools.

Providing equal educational opportunity to Asian American LEP students requires sound student assessment procedures and programs that can orient them and their parents to American society and American schools. Asian American LEP students need bilingual education and English as a Second Language (ESL) programs staffed by trained teachers to enable them to learn

English and at the same time to keep up in school. They need professional bilingual/bicultural counseling services to help them in their social adjustment and academic development. Our investigation has revealed that these needs of Asian American LEP students are being drastically underserved. In particular, there is a dire national shortage of trained bilingual/ESL teachers and counselors.³⁷

The Commission's findings are especially troubling in light of Ong's demographic projections which indicate that the numbers of school-age Asian Pacific American immigrants in 2020 will be comparable to or only slightly less than current levels which are "drastically underserved."

Other studies show that some school districts have responded to the needs of Asian Pacific LEP students by incorrectly classifying them as learning disabled instead of providing them with appropriate bilingual instruction as required by law.³⁸ Local research reveals similar findings. For example, school ethnographers, Trueba, Jacobs, and Kirton, in their study on Hmong elementary school students, observe: "Illiteracy in English continues to be the most frequently recorded reason for classifying minority children as 'learning disabled.'"³⁹ At the same time, LEP students, particularly from low SES backgrounds, are also being denied federally mandated Chapter 1 compensatory education services, according to a June 1992 report from the U.S. Department of Education.⁴⁰

ASSESSMENT POLICIES

These examples introduce larger issues of educational assessment that have local and national ramifications. Policies of placement, tracking, promotion, and graduation based on standardized testing, for example, are especially problematic because of linguistic barriers, cultural biases, and other disadvantages experienced by Asian Pacific students due to time pressure and the stress of the test-taking situation.

In principle, the purpose of student assessment and evaluation is to identify areas of weakness that can be strengthened through the targeting of appropriate services and strategies. Once targeted, resources should be mobilized to enable all students to overcome those weaknesses in order to achieve their full potential. In practice, assessment policies, particularly those based on standardized testing, have led to the in-

equitable distribution of educational resources, accompanied by the sorting of students, often according to race, socioeconomic status, gender, and English proficiency.⁴¹

The value and validity of national standards as well as assessment policies on the local level such as the controversial “Certificate of Mastery” proposals in Massachusetts will continue to be debated in the coming years, hopefully with consideration given to the needs of Asian Pacific students. Alternative assessment strategies, such as portfolios of student work collected over time and exhibitions that demonstrate students’ learning and application of knowledge in a variety of domains, offer promise. Nevertheless, even those learner-centered approaches to assessment must attend to the importance of linguistic and cultural diversity in their implementation.

LANGUAGE AND CULTURE SHIFT

*If you try to teach them you are not American, they will not believe it.
I think if I try to tell about our generation, they will not want to learn.*⁴²

a Vietnamese refugee parent

*I’ve been trying to put my life as a puzzle together but I don’t know if
I will be able to finish my puzzle. But I will do anything to try to finish
my puzzled life.*⁴³

a Vietnamese American student

The most striking shift in the school-age Asian Pacific population according to Ong’s projections is the marked increase in those born in the U.S.—with growth rates ranging from 125 percent to 225 percent, depending on projection assumptions, for the U.S., California, and the Mid-Atlantic area.

The NELS:88 Asian Pacific study may be instructive here. For example, even though three-fourths of the Asian student population came from bilingual families, nearly 60 percent indicated that they have low proficiency in their home language compared to 66 percent who have high proficiency in English. Interestingly, only 6 percent of those students from bilingual families reported attending a bilingual program of instruction during their first two years of school in the U.S. And, although the study noted that 73 percent of the Asian students came from bilingual homes, only 27 percent were identified as such by at least one

of their teachers—suggesting that many linguistic and cultural issues faced by students in moving between their dual worlds of home/family and school are not recognized or addressed.

This profile is consistent with findings by Lily Wong-Fillmore and others in a landmark study providing evidence that as language minority children learn English in the U.S., they lose their native language—the younger the age, the greater the effect—due to the dominant status of English in early childhood education programs and in society.⁴⁴

The researchers further suggest that as the home language is lost in the process of acquiring English, family relations also erode. The following example may well represent the future of parent-child relations in many Asian Pacific American families with immigrant parents and American-born children as projected in the coming decades:

An interviewer told the story of a Korean immigrant family in which the children had all but lost the ability to speak their native language after just a few years in American schools. The parents could speak English only with difficulty, and the grandmother who lived with the family could neither speak or understand it. She felt isolated and unappreciated by her grandchildren. The adults spoke to the children exclusively in Korean. They refused to believe that the children could not understand them. They interpreted the children's unresponsiveness as disrespect and rejection. It was only when the interviewer, a bilingual Korean-English speaker, tried to question the children in both languages that the parents finally realized that the children were no longer able to speak or understand Korean. The father wept as he spoke of not being able to talk to his children. One of the children commented that she did not understand why her parents always seemed to be angry.⁴⁵

It is ironic that the strengths and cultural values of family support which are so often praised as explanations for the academic achievement of Asian Pacific American students⁴⁶ are severely undercut by the lack of programmatic and policy support for broad-based bilingual instruction and native language development, particularly in early childhood education. The unfortunate cost of such policies is the sacrifice of

substantive communication and meaningful relationships across generations within many Asian Pacific American families and the squandering of linguistic and cultural resources within the society.

SUPPORT SERVICES

As students are mainstreamed from a Cambodian bilingual class, or Laotian class. . .they are dropped—thud!—on the floor, because we have sort of an all or nothing thing, where they're in a full-time bilingual program, or they get no support at all.⁴⁷

a state education official

My parents don't like my clothes, my hair, the way I talk. They don't like my future plans. They don't like anything about me.⁴⁸

an Asian American student

As noted in previous sections, large numbers of Asian Pacific immigrant and refugee students have critical needs that are unaddressed because of the lack of bilingual/bicultural school personnel to provide appropriate counseling and guidance services.

While the need for bilingual counselors, advisors, tutors, and other support service personnel is expected to remain at current crisis levels given the population projections for school-age immigrants through 2020, there will also be a dramatic increase in the need for bicultural/multicultural school counselors and for teacher training in culturally appropriate counseling methods to attend to the complex issues of identity and cultural dissonance that will follow from the huge increase in second-generation school-age Asian Pacific Americans with immigrant parents.

The need for targeted support services to deal with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and other consequences of the Southeast Asian refugee experience should decline, assuming that no new waves of refugees flee from Asia to the U.S. Given the continuing war within Cambodia as well as the instability of other countries such as Thailand, Vietnam, the Philippines, and Myanmar (Burma), however, the future of refugee resettlement policy is difficult to predict. Initial research on the children of U.S.–Vietnam combat veterans with PTSD also suggests that there are second-generation effects, such as a higher than average inci-

dence of attention-deficit disorder and other learning disabilities. If so, then the continuing social consequences of the Vietnam War may persist for another generation of American-born children of refugees, and will demand recognition from policy-makers and service-providers.

At the same time, urban youth and schools in the 1990s have faced wars of a different kind here at home. Many Asian Pacific American youth, in spite of the model minority myth, have been profoundly affected by guns and gang violence, drugs, and the AIDS epidemic. Whether these public health crises will gain relief by 2020 is unclear, but the signs so far are pessimistic. In response, urban schools are evolving into multi-service centers, in addition to being institutions of teaching and learning. Local health centers, social service agencies, and other community-based organizations are essential partners for the future development of effective school policy and practice. In areas with significant Asian Pacific populations, the experience and involvement of Asian Pacific community organizations will be invaluable to schools in the coming years.

Furthermore, although the issues of identity, language and culture shift, and intergenerational conflict, as highlighted above, will present major challenges to schools, families, and communities in the coming years, these issues are not new to some Asian Pacific American groups such as Japanese, Chinese and Filipino Americans. Research and counseling methods, outreach strategies, and organizational models from those communities may be transferrable. Therefore, it will be increasingly important to share lessons, expertise, and resources across communities in a coordinated manner in order to provide maximum support for the education and healthy development of new generations.

PARENT EMPOWERMENT

The refugee parents are frustrated. On the one hand, they want to push their children academically, they want them to become someone in this society, to work hard, to study well. On the other hand, they cannot effectively intervene in the education process, they cannot even attend school functions... even school conferences, because of the language, but most often they are not familiar with the process, with... how things get done here.⁴⁹

a Vietnamese community leader
and candidate for elected office

For a variety of reasons, ranging from cultural expectations to long work hours and lack of transportation to the language barrier, Asian Pacific parents play limited roles in direct relation to the schools their children attend. Meanwhile, many schools exclude Asian Pacific American parents from meaningful participation as a result of the language barrier, lack of training and cultural sensitivity, poor outreach and follow-up, and lack of respect.

Yet, parents are the initial, and often most influential “teachers” in their children’s lives. In turn, teachers and administrators who remain unaware of their students’ home environments are neither able to make connections between the curriculum and students’ own experiences nor prepared to provide appropriate support when students confront difficulties.

As policies for reforming school governance increasingly focus on decentralized structures of school-site management that grant greater decision-making authority to stakeholders within schools, such as principals and teachers, parents must also claim their rightful place at the table. Culturally appropriate outreach, training, and follow-up are critical to enable Asian Pacific parents to play significant roles in school reform and governance. Models for Asian Pacific American parent organizing, parent training, and parent/school partnerships need to be identified, refined, and disseminated.

Inevitably, parent organizing and advocacy efforts lead to issues of political representation and empowerment on school boards. Speaking for a coalition of Latino and Southeast Asian parents who sued the Lowell School Committee and the City of Lowell, Massachusetts, for Title VI discrimination, Alex Huertas asserted in 1987: “The lack of Latino and Asian representation has made our struggle harder. In next year’s elections, we need to promote our own candidates.”⁵⁰

Data from the National Association of School Boards shows that only 0.1 percent of the nation’s school board members are Asian Pacific American. In a handful of cases, primarily in California, individuals such as Warren Furutani in Los Angeles, Wilma Chan and Jeanne Quan in Oakland, Leland Yee in San Francisco, and Michael Chang in Cupertino, California, as well as Alan Cheung in Montgomery County, Maryland, have run successfully for election to local school boards and have had significant impact on district policies. Through her election to the St. Paul, Minnesota, school board in 1991, Choua Lee became the first

Hmong American elected public official in the country. In 1992, Won So was appointed as the student representative and became the first Asian Pacific American to serve on the New York City school board.

New York's schools—the largest system in the country—are governed through a decentralized structure of community boards representing each district of the city. Any parent is eligible to vote in community school board elections, regardless of their status as a registered voter. The New York City policy of parent empowerment is especially significant for immigrant Asian Pacific and Latino parents who may not be citizens, but who desire and deserve a voice in school board decision-making.

Given the large numbers of immigrant Asian Pacific parents through 2020, such a structure could have far-reaching impact if adapted in other cities with large Asian Pacific population centers. At the same time, the numbers of American-born Asian Pacifics will also increase dramatically—magnifying the importance of voter registration, leadership development, and other foundations of political empowerment in order to gain greater influence over school board policies.

IMPLICATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

In addition to recommendations presented in the sections above, more comprehensive research on Asian Pacific Americans—research that is not skewed either by model minority assumptions or by excluding LEP Asian Pacific students from sample populations—is needed to drive national and local educational policy. Quantitative and qualitative educational research studies, disaggregated by ethnicity and conducted in native languages, are especially important to initiate. Given the increases in Asian American poverty during the 1980s,⁵¹ relationships between education and socioeconomic status are also critical to explore.

In light of Ong's population projections, foundations and government agencies along with universities and schools must take greater responsibility for Asian Pacific American research and policy development. However, consistent with conclusions from a recent report on Asian American poverty in Boston,⁵² the capacity must also be developed *within* Asian Pacific American communities to conduct systematic research and policy analysis on educational issues and related concerns.

Conclusion: Recognizing Strengths for the Future

As the nation prepares to move into the 21st century toward the year 2020, it is clear that the economic, cultural, and political influence of Asia will become increasingly decisive in international affairs, and that the Asian Pacific American population will continue to grow at a fantastic pace.

Asian Pacific Americans, particularly the first generation, invest heavily in education. Maintaining deep respect for teachers and holding high expectations for student achievement based on hard work, Asian Pacific Americans have much to contribute to the debate over educational policy and the process of educational reform.

Yet, the strengths offered by Asian Pacific Americans to society are typically not recognized.⁵³ For example, even though educational reports written by everyone from the President and the Secretary of Education to local school boards and chambers of commerce are unanimous in lamenting the low level of U.S. students' foreign-language skills, none of those reports calls for strengthening the educational support for immigrant students who already speak many languages other than English. Why do we fail to embrace our students who are native speakers of languages like Korean, Vietnamese, or Chinese? Why do we not enable them to stay in school and develop their multilingual/multicultural skills in English? Rather than seeing them, at best, as special needs populations outside of the mainstream of our schools or, at worst, as foreigners whose accents are aggravating and who should go back where they came from, we have to learn to see what great contributions they can make to our schools and society because of their multilingual and multicultural backgrounds.

Similarly, a recent trend in management training at leadership academies promotes physical workouts and survival tests designed to develop character, discipline, and stamina. Yet, do we consider the experiences of refugees and immigrants or even those of urban Latinos and African Americans who have come through real-life survival tests, walking hundreds of miles without food or crossing the sea in sinking boats or dealing with gang warfare in the streets? They are real survivors who have already developed and proven their strength of character, discipline, and stamina. They have all the qualities we look for in lead-

ers, but they are never recognized. At best, they are seen as helpless or needy clients; at worst they are resented as a burden to society.

Will K-12 educational policy in the 21st century promote Asian Pacific American exclusion or contribution? If informed by demographic analyses, then the imperative is clear. For if the strengths of Asian Pacific Americans continue to go untapped, especially in the field of education, then we as a society have not progressed very far in the hundred years since the San Francisco school board mandated that the city's children should not associate with or be influenced by their peers "of the Mongolian race."

Notes

1. *San Francisco Chronicle* (May 7, 1905); cited in Victor Low, *The Unimpressable Race* (San Francisco: East/West, 1982), 88.
2. Superintendent's Letter to Principals, Circular No. 8, January 12, 1906; cited in Low, *The Unimpressable Race*, 89.
3. Low, *The Unimpressable Race*.
4. Ling-chi Wang, "Lau v. Nichols: History of Struggle for Equal and Quality Education," in *Asian-Americans: Social and Psychological Perspectives*, vol. 2, edited by Russell Endo, Stanley Sue, and Nathaniel N. Wagner (Palo Alto, California: Science and Behavior, 1980), 181-216.
5. Peter Nien-chu Kiang, *Southeast Asian Parent Empowerment: The Challenge of Changing Demographics in Lowell, Massachusetts*, Monograph No. 1, Massachusetts Association for Bilingual Education, 1990.
6. Joan McCarthy First and John Willshire Carrera, *New Voices: Immigrant Students in U.S. Public Schools* (Boston: National Coalition of Advocates for Students, 1988), 6; U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, *Civil Rights Issues Facing Asian Americans in the 1990s*, Washington, D.C., February 1992, 76.
7. Robert W. Gardner, Bryant Robey, and Peter C. Smith, "Asian Americans: Growth, Change, and Diversity," *Population Bulletin* 40:4 (October 1985).
8. First and Carrera, *New Voices*; U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, *Civil Rights Issues Facing Asian Americans in the 1990s*.
9. Council of the Great City Schools; cited in "25 Largest Public School Districts," *Black Issues in Higher Education* (May 7, 1992), 62.
10. Unpublished student essay, 1989.
11. School District of Philadelphia, *Asian/Pacific Americans: Getting to Know Us—A Resource Guide for Teachers*, 1988; and John Nobuya Tsuchida, *A Guide on Asian & Pacific Islander American Students* (Washington, D.C.: National Education Association, 1991).
12. For further development of these ideas and for examples of specific learning activities based on a thematic approach, see Peter N. Kiang,

- Asian American Studies Curriculum Resource Guide (Massachusetts K–12)*, University of Massachusetts and Massachusetts Asian American Educators Association, May 1992.
13. Sucheng Chan, *Asian Americans: An Interpretive History* (Boston: Twayne, 1991); and Ronald Takaki, *Strangers from a Distant Shore* (Boston: Little Brown, 1989).
 14. This occurred when the movie *Rambo* opened in Boston in May 1985.
 15. Margaret A. Gibson, *Accommodation without Assimilation: Sikh Immigrants in an American High School* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1988), 143.
 16. Peter Schmidt, "L.A. Events Seen Touching Schools 'for Years,'" *Education Week* (May 13, 1992), 1, 12.
 17. Larry Tye, "Hate Crimes on Rise in U.S.," *Boston Globe* (July 29, 1990).
 18. Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, "Young and Violent: The Growing Menace of America's Neo-Nazi Skinheads," New York, 1988; and Diego Ribadeneira, "Study Says Teen-agers' Racism Rampart," *Boston Globe* (October 18, 1990).
 19. Peter Schmidt, "New Survey Discerns Deep Divisions among U.S. Youths on Race Relations," *Education Week* (March 25, 1992), 5.
 20. U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, *Civil Rights Issues Facing Asian Americans in the 1990s*, 97–99.
 21. *Asian Week* (October 13, 1989).
 22. Kiang, Southeast Asian Empowerment; and George Kagiwada, "The Killing of Thong Hy Huynh: Implications of a Rashomon Perspective," in *Frontiers of Asian American Studies*, edited by Gail M. Nomura et al. (Pullman, Washington: Washington State University Press, 1989), 253–265.
 23. Sonia Nieto, *Affirming Diversity* (New York: Longman, 1992).
 24. Unpublished essay, 1991.
 25. For further discussion about the importance of voice in multicultural education, see Antonia Darder, *Culture and Power in the Classroom* (New York: Bergin & Garvey, 1991); Nieto, *Affirming Diversity*; and Catherine E. Walsh, *Pedagogy and the Struggle for Voice: Issues in Language, Power, and Schooling for Puerto Ricans* (New York: Bergin & Garvey, 1991).
 26. American Council on Education, 1989.
 27. Glass ceiling studies suggest that the disproportionately small number of Asian Pacific Americans in leadership positions in both public and private sectors face particular difficulties due to stereotypes, cultural barriers, and contradictory expectations. This deserves further study in the education field.
 28. U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, *Civil Rights Issues Facing Asian Americans in the 1990s*, 77–79.
 29. Bob H. Suzuki, "Education and the Socialization of Asian Americans: A Revisionist Analysis of the 'Model Minority' Thesis," *Amerasia Journal*

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30. National Education Association, *Report of the Asian and Pacific Islander Concerns Study Committee*, June 1987; Joan C. Baratz-Snowden and Richard Duran, *The Educational Progress of Language Minority Students: Findings from the 1983–1984 NAEP Reading Survey*, Princeton, Educational Testing Service, January 1987.
 31. National Center for Education Statistics, *Language Characteristics and Academic Achievement: A Look at Asian and Hispanic Eighth Graders in NELS:88*, Washington, D.C., U.S. Department of Education, February 1992.
 32. *Ibid.*, 3.
 33. First and Carrera, *New Voices*, 15–70; and U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, *Civil Rights Issues Facing Asian Americans in the 1990s*, 68–103.
 34. Unpublished essay, 1988.
 35. James Crawford, ed., *Language Loyalties: A Source Book on the Official English Controversy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992); Kenji Hakuta, *Mirror of Language: The Debate on Bilingualism* (New York: Basic Books, 1986).
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 37. U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, *Civil Rights Issues Facing Asian Americans in the 1990s*.
 38. National Education Association, *Report of the Asian and Pacific Islander Concerns Study Committee*, Washington, D.C., June 1987.
 39. Henry T. Trueba, Lila Jacobs, and Elizabeth Kirton, *Cultural Conflict and Adaptation: The Case of Hmong Children in American Society* (Basingstroke, United Kingdom: Falmer Press, 1990), 91.
 40. Peter Schmidt, "L.E.P. Students Denied Remedial Help, Study Finds," *Education Week* (June 17, 1992), 11.
 41. First and Carrera, *New Voices*, 42–55; and Joan First, John B. Kellogg, Cheryl A. Almeida, and Richard Gray, Jr., *The Good Common School: Making the Vision Work for All Children* (Boston: National Coalition of Advocates for Students, 1991), 51–86, 135–165.
 42. Unpublished essay, 1989.
 43. Unpublished essay, 1991.
 44. Lily Wong-Fillmore et al., "When Learning a Second Language Means Losing the First," *Early Child Research Quarterly*, in press.

45. Lily Wong-Fillmore, "Preschoolers and Native Language Loss," *MABE Newsletter*, Massachusetts Association for Bilingual Education (Spring 1991), 2.
46. Nathan Caplan, John K. Whitmore, and Marcella H. Choy, *The Boat People and Achievement in America* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1989).
47. First and Carrera, *New Voices*, 50.
48. Gibson, *Accommodation without Assimilation*, 135.
49. Vu-Duc Vuong, quoted in First and Carrera, *New Voices*, 77.
50. Kiang, *Southeast Asian Parent Empowerment*, 13.
51. In Boston, for example, Asian Americans were the only group whose poverty rate increased during the 1980s. See Irene Sege, "Recent Arrivals," *Boston Globe* (June 17, 1992), 1, 32; and Dean S. Toji and James H. Johnson, "Asian and Pacific Islander American Poverty: The Working Poor and the Jobless Poor," *Amerasia Journal* 18:1 (1992), 83–91.
52. Carlton Sagara and Peter Kiang, *Recognizing Poverty in Boston's Asian American Community* (Boston: Boston Foundation, 1992), 66.
53. This section is adapted from Peter N. Kiang, "Social Studies for the Pacific Century," *Social Education* 55:7 (November/December 1991), 458–462.